

**IN-SERVICE EDUCATION AND CLASSROOM  
PRACTICE: GEOGRAPHY TEACHING IN NAMIBIA**

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A minithesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of M.Phil in the Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape



**UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE**


**February 2001**

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## NOTE TO THE READER

It is with great sadness that the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape wishes to inform you that Mr Raymond Simasiku Mutwa passed away before he was able to make the few changes to his mini-thesis suggested by the examiners.

It is for this reason that the reader may find that the mini-thesis still contains some grammatical and typographical errors.



(Prof) Maureen Robinson  
Supervisor





## ABSTRACT

### IN-SERVICE EDUCATION AND CLASSROOM PRACTICE: GEOGRAPHY TEACHING IN NAMIBIA

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After gaining independence in 1990, the Ministry of Education and Culture in Namibia introduced significant educational reforms that were to be implemented by currently serving teachers. As most of these teachers were trained according to the old paradigm of education, it became necessary to train serving teachers towards the new paradigm that puts emphasis on learner-centred rather than teacher-centred education. This training was done through in-service education programmes.

In this mini-thesis, I explore the impact of these in-service programmes on the classroom practice of some geography teachers in Namibia. The study also focuses on the perceptions that these teachers have about learner-centred education and how far they have gone in the implementation process. Factors that inhibit the successful implementation of learner-centred teaching and learning methods in geography classrooms are also identified and discussed. Suggestions on how to improve the present form of in-service education in Namibia are also included.

The study used qualitative research methods and was conducted in the Caprivi region. It involved four geography grade 10 teachers from different schools. These teachers were selected on the basis that they had learned about learner-centred education through in-service programmes provided by advisory teachers.

The results of the study indicate that these geography teachers have a clear understanding of what learner-centred education implies. They have an idea of what they should be doing differently in a learner-centred classroom as opposed to

teacher-centred education. The results also indicate that the teachers have not implemented learner-centred teaching methods in their classrooms. Various factors are identified as negatively influencing the implementation of learner-centred education in schools, including overcrowded classrooms, lack of support from principals and in-service providers and lack of resources.

In order to improve on in-service education in its current form, it is recommended that teachers should be involved in the planning and implementation phases of in-service education programmes. Workshops should be followed up with training and support from the in-service providers. Enough resources in the form of appropriate textbooks that promote active participation in classrooms should be supplied to schools.

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## DECLARATION

I declare that In-service education and classroom practice: geography teaching in Namibia is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

RAYMOND SIMASIKU MUTWA

FEBRUARY 2001

Signed



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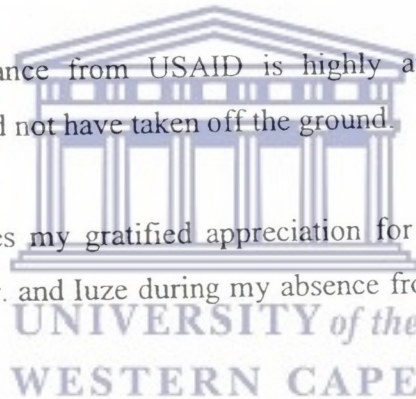
## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge my gratitude to Prof. Maureen Robinson for having consented to promote me towards a Masters degree. Despite her tight work schedule, she has been able to constructively guide me and correct my work.

I am extremely grateful to the geography teachers and principals of the four schools for the interest and cooperation they have shown in working with me. My gratitude also goes to my colleagues in the Ministry of Education for their words of encouragement and assistance with basic computer skills that enabled me to type my own work.

Generous financial assistance from USAID is highly appreciated. Without its assistance, this study would not have taken off the ground.

My wife, Mulela, deserves my gratified appreciation for looking after our three children, Sehwe, Mutwa jr. and Iuze during my absence from home while pursuing this study.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Namibia is a large, sparsely populated country situated in Southern Africa. According to the 1991 census, the country had an estimated population of 1.5 million people. The most populated areas are in the north of the country. It is a country with a variety of ethnic groups and many different languages. The neighboring countries are South Africa in the south, Botswana and Zimbabwe in the east and Angola and Zambia in the north. The earliest inhabitants in Namibia were the San people. Namibia became a German colony in 1884. During the Great War of 1914-1918, Namibia fell to the Western Allies and was occupied by South Africa. In 1920, Britain was given the mandate to administer Namibia but handed it over to South Africa, which began to treat the country as its own (Karlsson, 2000:3). Apartheid laws were introduced and blacks, whites and coloureds became segregated. Namibia gained its independence on March 21, 1990.

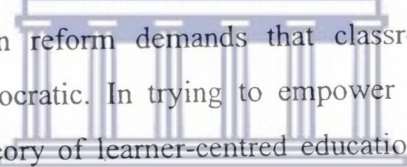
#### **Background to the problem**

At independence in 1990, the new government inherited an education system that was created to match an apartheid ideology enforced on Namibians by South Africa. The education system was divided into eleven separate and largely autonomous education authorities divided mainly along the lines of ethnic groups and characterized by inequality and separation. Before independence, the majority of teachers were unqualified both in terms of their level of education and in terms of being prepared for their tasks. Teachers serving under different administrations did not follow similar training programmes. Some programmes developed extended competencies and produced teachers with high-level qualifications while others provided minimal qualifications. According to the figures released in the report of



the Education Committee of 1985, it was estimated that between seven and 37 percent of the total number of teachers in Namibia did not have Standard 8 (Grade 10) and 57 percent of the total number of teachers did not have Standard 10 (Grade 12) (Amukugo, 1993:195).

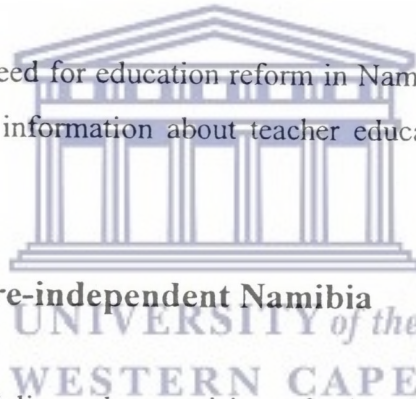
The quality and effectiveness of schools in any country depends on the nature and success of teacher education programmes. With regard to this, the new government has re-organized both in-service and pre-service teacher-training programmes to meet the demands of the new basic education reforms. Training for teachers in service was given priority in order to improve their competence and enable them to cope with changes brought about by post-independence reforms within the education system.



The Namibian education reform demands that classroom practices should be learner-centred and democratic. In trying to empower teachers professionally in order to translate the theory of learner-centred education into practice (classroom teaching), the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture employed a combination of both the 'cascade' models and the 'training of the trainers' models in the provision of in-service education. In the 'cascade' model, a group of teachers are given a short training course and are required to pass on their new knowledge and skills to other teachers through formal courses. These training courses are held at a central venue such as a Teachers' Resource Centre (TRC) and run for a period of three to five days. In the 'training of trainers models' teachers are selected for their good practice and are trained as 'Teacher Advisers' and are subsequently employed in this capacity to train other teachers either from a TRC or by visiting schools. With these models, in-service education could reach as many teachers as possible within a short period of time.

As a former teacher of geography in the Caprivi region where this study was conducted, I attended numerous workshops organized by advisory teachers. After training, teachers were expected to implement what they have learnt back in their schools. In most cases, teachers were faced with difficulties in the implementation process because of lack of follow-up support from course providers and an unsupportive school climate within which they worked. Since my appointment as advisory teacher for geography and social studies in 1996, I have organized and run workshops for geography teachers without evaluating the impact that these courses have on teachers and the difficulties that teachers face in implementing them. In this study, I investigated the implementation of learner-centred education in geography classrooms as a result of the in-service programme that teachers have received.

In trying to understand the need for education reform in Namibia, it is important to first give some background information about teacher education before and after independence.



### **Teacher education in pre-independent Namibia**

Before the advent of colonialism, the provision of education to the indigenous population of Namibia was done by three missionary societies that operated in the country. The Rhenish Missionary Society provided education to the Namas and Hereros who lived in the eastern, central, western and southern parts of the country from as early as 1842. Around 1870, the Finnish Missionary Society began operating in Owamboland in the north while the Catholic Missionary Society began its work among the Namas in 1888 and the Hereros in 1896 and expanded their activities to the Okavango region in 1910. Missionary education concentrated on literacy to enable the indigenous people to read the Bible. The curriculum also included reading, writing, arithmetic, music, singing and handicraft. Young men were trained in industrial activities such as trade, agriculture and horticulture while

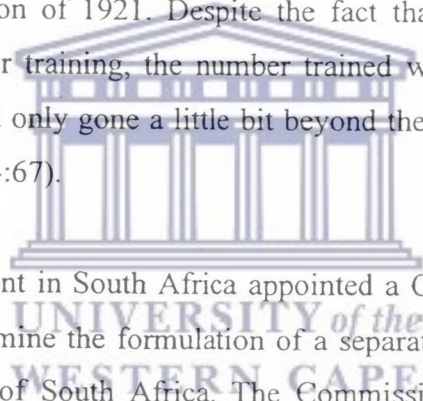
girls were trained in domestic tasks. The most intelligent pupils were selected and trained to assist the missionaries in spreading the gospel (Cohen, 1994:62; Amukugo, 1993:40).

During the same period, the white population benefited from both missionary and government involvement in their education. The first school for whites was established in 1876 by the Rhenish Missionary Society at Otjimbingwe. By the end of German rule, about seventeen primary schools, two government secondary schools and one Catholic secondary school for girls were already in existence for whites. White education was highly subsidized with free textbooks for teachers and learners. The curriculum in white schools was the same as that of the Cape Province of South Africa (Cohen, 1994:88). Comparatively, education for whites aimed to reproduce the German schooling system while the one for blacks and coloureds aimed at converting people to Christianity and preparing them for semi-skilled labour.

Teacher education in Namibia was neglected and the country had to depend on teachers trained in South Africa or Germany for white, coloured and baster schools. Schools in black areas were served by missionaries and untrained teachers. During the German colonial era, two teacher-training colleges were established for blacks. The Rhenish Mission opened a teacher training college called Augustineum at Otjimbingwe as early as 1866 but was later transferred to Okahandja in 1890. This teacher training institution remained in existence for 35 years and managed to train only 40 teachers until it closed down in 1901. The entry requirement to this institution was Standard 2 and upon completion, teachers were able to instruct pupils up to Standard 4. The Finnish Mission established another teacher training institute at Oniipa in Owamboland between 1910-1914.



The curriculum at these training institutions was dominated by the study of the Bible, hence most of the teachers trained were under-qualified (Salia-Bao, 1991:77; Cohen, 1994:88-89). The Catholic Mission opened a teacher training college at Dobra, north of Windhoek in 1925. Coloureds could not be accommodated either in white or black institutions and had to attend training institutions for their own ethnic group in the Cape. The minimum entry requirement to a coloured teacher training school was Standard 8 and upon completion of two years of study, the trainees were awarded with a coloured Lower Primary Teachers' Course. Those who entered with Standard 10 were awarded with a Higher Primary Teachers' Course upon successful completion of two years of teacher training. Like coloureds, whites had to go to South Africa for any form of tertiary or vocational training with financial assistance in terms of the Proclamation of 1921. Despite the fact that missionary societies provided elementary teacher training, the number trained was very small and the few 'qualified' teachers had only gone a little bit beyond the stage of being able to read and write (Cohen, 1994:67).



In 1949, the new government in South Africa appointed a Commission headed by Dr W.W.M. Eiselen to examine the formulation of a separate system of education for the indigenous people of South Africa. The Commission recommended that among others, there should be an increase in government control over black education and called for an establishment of the division of Bantu Affairs with its own Department of Bantu Education. The recommendations of the Commission formed the basis of the Bantu Education Act, No. 47 of 1953, which codified the policy of segregated education. In 1958, a Commission headed by Dr H.J. Van Zyl of the South African Education Department was appointed to look into the possibility of establishing separate education systems for blacks and coloureds in Namibia, then called South West Africa (SWA) and to what extent the South African system of Bantu Education could be applied to SWA. The Commission recommended that the South African Bantu Education syllabus should be introduced

in black schools in SWA. The Van Zyl Commission pointed out that they were too few teacher recruits, and the country had an acute shortage of trained teachers and the training of secondary school teachers was not satisfactory. Despite all these observations, the Commission failed to recommend that more teacher training institutions be established or that aspiring black teachers should be trained in South Africa. The Commission stated: "Teacher education for South West African Natives cannot be satisfactorily carried out anywhere else than in South West Africa, and therefore it would have to be accepted as a local responsibility" (Cohen, 1994:99).

The Commission did not see any need to establish a coloured teacher training institution because there were too few candidates. The Commission observed that in 1958 there were only eleven coloured teacher trainees in South Africa and recommended that the Department of Education should continue making funds available for this group to study in South Africa. Another commission, the Odendaal Commission of 1962-1963 endorsed the recommendations of the Van Zyl Commission and the final phase of the entrenchment of the South African Bantu Education Act occurred with this commission. It also took cognizance of the shortage of black teachers and recommended that a government teacher training institution should be established in Owamboland to replace the two Finnish training schools. It also recommended that a special course should be introduced for aspiring women teachers with Standard 4 as an admission requirement. This was in recognition of the poor performance of black girls in schools, which subsequently led to black women being relegated to lower positions in the teaching profession (Cohen 1994:113; Salia-Bao, 1991: 78).

From the mid-1970s until the 1980s, black teacher trainees had access to seven institutions within Namibia. These institutions were mainly secondary schools that had teacher-training sections attached to them. Teachers could only qualify in two courses, namely, the Lower Primary Teachers' Certificate (LPTC) and the Primary

Teachers' Certificate (PTC). During this period, the LPTC had already been abolished in South Africa because of its lower standards. Despite being advised to abolish it in Namibia in the late 1970s, most institutions continued to offer the course in addition to the PTC course. There was no secondary school-level training offered in Namibia. In 1977, black trainees were allowed to enrol for a two-year Junior Secondary Teachers' Certificate (JSTC) at Augustineum College. This course was the highest level of teacher training available in the country. Up until 1978, there was no teacher training institution for coloureds before the opening of Khomasdal Teacher Training College for primary school teachers. As for the whites, teachers were trained in South Africa before the Windhoek Teacher Training College was built in 1979. Entry requirements for the three ethnic groups (whites, blacks and coloureds) to teacher training colleges differed considerably. For example, coloured trainees entered the LPTC course after Standard 8 while blacks only needed Standard 4 to enter for the same qualification. For the PTC course, coloureds required Standard 10 while blacks required only a Standard 8 certificate. For the whites, the lowest entry requirement was Standard 10 and more courses were available to this group (Cohen, 1994: 140).

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Students qualifying for admission at universities had to go to South Africa because Namibia had no university of its own. Blacks had access to three black universities in South Africa, namely: University of the North near Pietersburg, in the Transvaal; the University of Zululand in Natal and the University of Fort Hare in the Eastern Cape. Coloureds had access to the University of the Western Cape in Bellville, Cape Town and whites had access to ten universities. Some liberal white universities such as Cape Town, Witwatersrand, Natal and Rhodes allowed other ethnic groups to attend provided the courses they wished to pursue were not offered at the black or coloured universities.



In 1980, the Academy for Tertiary Education was established in Windhoek in line with the Academy for Tertiary Education Act, No. 13 of 1980. Its main purpose was to provide teacher training in Namibia. The institution did not enjoy an autonomous status at first and could not confer degrees or diplomas of its own because it was still attached to the University of South Africa (UNISA) and a technikon college in Pretoria. The government of South Africa was confronted with the fact Namibians who were in exile were receiving tertiary and vocational training and the Academy was established to counteract this. With the establishment of the Academy, students were able to train as secondary school teachers for the first time in Namibia (Salia-Bao, 1991:64).

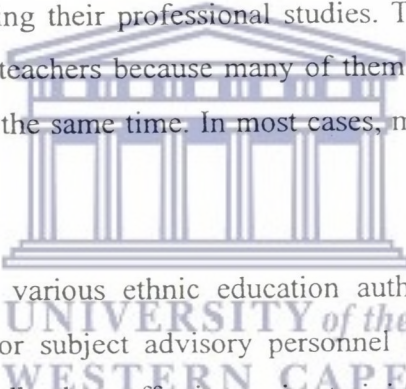
In 1980, proclamation AG 8 on Representative Authorities and the National Education Act 30 of 1980 led to the establishment of eleven separate and largely autonomous education authorities that were mainly divided along the lines of ethnic groups. The National Education Department was established under the same proclamation and took over the role of Bantu Education. Each ethnic group was empowered by proclamation AG 8 and the National Education Act 30 of 1980 to:

- Provide education to members of its ethnic group from Sub-Standard A to Standard 10
- Train teachers for primary schools under their jurisdiction
- Build schools and provide all equipment necessary
- Administer the college, hostel, school and non-formal institutions under them (Salia-Bao, 1991:78).

As a result of this proclamation, five teacher-training colleges were set up. These were Windhoek Education College (for whites only); Khomasdal Training College (for coloureds only); Ongwediva Training College (for Owambos); Rundu Teacher Training College (for Kavangos) and Caprivi Training College (for Caprivians). The



activities at the five colleges were coordinated by The Academy for Tertiary Education which had a profound influence on curricula through distance teaching, in-service training programmes and moderation of courses and examinations set by them. The curricula in the five colleges were determined by the apartheid policies that prevailed in the country. Teachers employed at the colleges for Africans were mostly under-qualified and unqualified and as a result they produced badly trained teachers. Most of the materials used in the colleges such as books, syllabi and curricula material were produced in South Africa and had no relevance to the Namibian situation. The Education Certificate Primary (ECP) course was offered at the three northern colleges of Ongwediva, Rundu and Caprivi. It was a two-year programme that required students to upgrade their academic qualification to Std 10 while at the same time doing their professional studies. The failure rate was very high among black student teachers because many of them were ambitious to get a matriculation certificate at the same time. In most cases, many students failed both (Dahlstrom 1995:274).



Before independence, the various ethnic education authorities used the subject advisors in their regions or subject advisory personnel from the Department of National Education in Windhoek to offer in-service training. Training courses were based on problems identified by inspectors and advisors during their routine visits to schools or on needs expressed by teachers during discussions. In most cases, in-service training courses were organized without a proper needs assessment. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), such as the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN) and Rossing Foundation also played a significant role in the provision of in-service education. The Rossing Foundation concentrated on raising awareness among school principals as to their role as change agents in a new independent and democratic Namibia (Auala, 1992:2).


## Teacher education in independent Namibia

At independence, the education system in Namibia was still organized on a racial and ethnic basis. This meant that the whole education system needed a complete overhaul that would reflect the ethos of democracy, equality and justice. The Government embarked upon an educational reform programme that would establish a common, united, integrated and open education system for all. For education for all to become a reality, teachers needed to develop new visions and new commitments. Classroom practices, curriculum content and medium of instruction were revised. For schools in Namibia to change, teachers were expected to become both agents and facilitators of change. The new system was aimed at providing ten years of Basic Education; two years of senior secondary education; degree programmes at the University of Namibia and certificates and diploma courses at teacher education colleges, vocational training centres and the Polytechnic of Namibia (Angula, 2000:2).

A programme for the reform of teacher education and preparation was initiated in 1992 with the support of the Teacher Education Reform Project (TERP), which was financed by the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA). As a result, the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) programme was introduced and implemented in all colleges of education in Namibia. The development of BETD broad curriculum was seen as a unifying factor from which all teacher education in the country would operate and contribute largely towards national unity. The curriculum was designed by subject area panels, which met with groups of primary and secondary teachers, subject advisors, regional planning officers, student teachers, principals, in-service officers, community leaders and international representatives for input, criticism, suggestions and comments (Craig et al, 1998: 38).

The BETD is a three-year programme that prepares teachers for Basic Education, which is ten years of schooling (Grade 1-10). Basic education is guaranteed in the constitution of the Republic of Namibia for children between the age of six and sixteen. According to Angula (2000:5), the BETD programme was designed to prepare new teachers in the spirit of the Constitution and promote democratic practices in teaching and learning. The idea of providing education for all was accompanied by a shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred education. The didactic one-way process of transferring knowledge from the teacher to the learner was and may still be the norm in Namibian classrooms. The learner-centred approach has thus been introduced in Namibian schools to keep in line with the goals of democracy and improved educational quality.

Angula asserts that the focus in any teaching exercise should be on how the learner learns:



The learner-centred approach assumes that the learner constructs knowledge...in this context the teacher is a guide, a facilitator and a mentor. Learning takes place through exploration, problem solving and group work. Exploration, interaction and mutual assistance are the core features of learner-centred education (2000:5).

Teacher educators are also expected to model their own classes according to the learner-centred approach. The assessment and evaluation of student teachers is expected to be in accordance with the principles of learner-centred education and interactive teaching and learning. During the first year of the BETD, student teachers devote their studies to the child's educational and developmental needs. They also spend three weeks in schools in order to familiarize themselves with the reality in classrooms and how schools operate. In the second year of the programme, student teachers have to choose the level of Basic Education that they would like to teach. At third year level, teacher trainees make their final choices whether to teach at lower primary, upper primary or junior secondary. When the BETD programme



was evaluated at colleges, positive improvements in the instructional methods of teacher educators surfaced although most educators admit that there is still a long way to go in providing widespread models of learner-centred teaching to student teachers.

For in-service training, the Ministry of Education and Culture created a working party comprising of Ministry representatives, teachers' unions and some organizations committed to education reform to address the needs of serving teachers. Recommendations on INSET in Namibia were entrusted to the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) for coordination and implementation. These recommendations included:

- The consolidation of coordinating, planning, and advisory roles, particularly in the support for the Teacher In-service Training Programmes
- The development and implementation of teacher in-service projects in mathematics, physical science, life sciences and English, especially to assist teachers in implementing successfully the new Junior Secondary School Curriculum
- The development of a network of teacher resource centres to support in-service education activities at regional, district and cluster levels (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993a: 77).

### **Aims of this study**

It is quite clear that changes in the education system in Namibia as discussed in the previous section put new demands on the teachers. In trying to account for the role of INSET in the implementation of change, the aims of this study were:

- To explore the extent to which INSET provided by advisory teachers impacts on the practice of geography teachers in Namibia
- To examine teachers' perceptions of and use of learner-centred education
- To identify factors that inhibit the successful implementation of learner-centred education in geography classrooms
- To suggest ways in which the quality of INSET provided to geography teachers can be improved.

### Research questions

The study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- What impact does in-service education have on the classroom practice of geography teachers in the implementation of learner-centred education?
- What perceptions do geography teachers have about learner-centred education?
- What type of support do teachers need in the shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred education?
- What problems do teachers experience in the implementation of learner-centred education?

### Significance of the study

At independence, the majority of teachers in Namibia were unqualified to respond adequately to proposed changes. A programme of in-service education was introduced to enable teachers to cope with these changes. In this study, the data collected from schools and teachers will give insight into the impact of INSET on the classroom practice of geography teachers. The information gathered could also be used to reflect on the successes and failures of the present INSET programmes.

The study may also shed light on the level of implementation of learner-centred education in Namibian schools. It may also provide valuable information on the complexity of the process of implementing educational change in Namibian schools. The future planning of INSET activities by advisory teachers would take into account some of these findings.

### **Limitations of the study**

The sample of four geography teachers used in this study was small and therefore one cannot generalize the findings to apply to all Namibian schools. Due to limited time, interview questions were not piloted in any of the schools in the region to evaluate and improve on them and this led to some questions not being properly interpreted by the teachers. Data collection was done in October when learners were preparing for the final examinations. This made it difficult for me to arrange follow-up visits to the schools to clarify some of the statements that emerged during the interviews and observations. Nevertheless, the study provides valuable information about the role that INSET has played in the implementation of learner-centred education in some Namibian schools and the obstacles and challenges faced by teachers in the implementation process.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, the literature relevant to in-service education and learner-centred education is reviewed. In order to understand the meaning of in-service education and the role that it plays in the implementation of change from teacher-centred to learner-centred education, a definition of the term INSET and the role that INSET plays in educational change are discussed. Aspects of INSET such as planning, support and evaluation are also included. As the study focuses on the shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred education, the meaning of learner-centred education according to policy documents in Namibia and in general is given. A discussion of some aspects of learner-centred education such as the role of the teacher and the learner, group work and questioning is also included.

#### **Definition of in-service education (INSET)**

Various researchers use different terms to describe the type of training that teachers receive after some initial preparation for the job of teaching. Some refer to it as in-service education; others as in-service education and training (INSET); staff development and professional development. Professional and staff development relate more to the idea of lifelong learning where teachers and other school staff can develop their professional competence, personal education and aspirations and general understanding of their changing roles and tasks. This can be done through guidance and training while on the job and programmes undertaken away from school settings. INSET has been defined in various ways:



Hofmeyr and Pavlich define INSET as:

The whole range of activities by which serving teachers and other categories of educationists within the formal school systems may extend and develop their personal education, professional competence and general understanding of the role which they and the schools are expected to play in their changing societies. INSET further includes the means whereby a teacher's personal needs and aspirations may be met as well as those of the system in which he or she serves (1987:82).

Ngcongco (1987:43) defines in-service education as "a set of programmes which assist teachers by improving their knowledge and increasing their desire to learn, improve their effectiveness in the classroom and in their professional service generally". Murphy offers a wide range of definitions for in-service education. In this study, the following definition has been chosen because it contains all the key elements of INSET and professional development. INSET is defined as:

The development of the individual from the whole range of events and activities by which serving teachers can extend their personal, academic, or practical education, their professional competence and their understanding of educational principles and methods (1985:7).

INSET in Namibia aims at developing the professional competence of serving teachers to enable them to understand their roles and tasks in changing societies. It also aims at improving their effectiveness in the classrooms and their understanding of educational principles and teaching methods.

The Ministry of Education and Culture, established a Working Party on In-service Teacher Education in 1991 to develop a *Five Year Development Plan For Teacher Improvement: The In-service Programme*. The Working Party identified the following objectives of the programme:

- To motivate and orientate teachers to a progressive philosophy of education which values the teaching of relevant knowledge and skills and encourages a classroom atmosphere in which teachers and learners flourish and which is learner-centred
- To assist teachers in acquiring the appropriate academic and professional skills to attain the first objective
- To assist teachers in improving their own proficiency in the English language, and their ability to teach through the English medium
- To improve general knowledge and subject competencies in teachers to a point where they are able to teach with confidence
- To inculcate in principals and other managers, the attitudes and managerial skills required to support the first objective
- To facilitate the development of the teaching profession, by encouraging in teachers a professional identity and enhancing the role of the teacher in the community (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1991:8).

In this study, the model of INSET which is explored is that of short training sessions that are provided to serving teachers to enable them to understand their changing roles and tasks and enhance their professional competence. The terms in-service education and in-service education and training (INSET) are used interchangeably throughout this study.

### **Planning of INSET**

It has been argued that INSET programmes that involve teachers in planning and presentation are more likely to succeed than the ones in which teachers are not involved. Planning that takes into account the needs of teachers and other staff members and their active participation will always yield good results in the implementation phase. Craig et al stress the point of active involvement as follows:

When teachers are actively involved and empowered in the reform of their own classrooms and schools, even those teachers with minimal levels of education and training are capable of changing the classroom environment and improving the achievement of their students. Conversely, when teachers are ignored, and when reforms come from above or are not connected to the daily realities of the classroom and local environment, even the most expensive and well designed interventions are almost sure to fail (1998:141).

According to Newton and Tarrant (1992), in-service education programmes that involve teachers in planning activities tend to have a greater chance of success in accomplishing set objectives than those without the assistance of participants. Ryan (1987) contends that staff development that is planned and executed by teachers in cooperation with their administrators is more useful than that planned by administrators without teachers. In programmes where teachers participate fully in the planning phase, the incentive to succeed is fully strengthened. The planning group, consisting of teachers and administrators, would depend on past teacher experiences and administrative leadership style to enhance feelings of mutual trust and respect. Ngcongco argues that in-service programmes can bring about teacher effectiveness if the following points are attended to:

- The creation of conducive working conditions and the provision of resources that will promote teacher growth
- Teachers must be involved and take responsibility for in-service programmes in order for them to be effective
- Teachers' needs can be assessed for the purpose of designing INSET programmes. This can be done by principals of schools, inspectors, advisory teachers and finding out from teachers themselves what their needs and wants are



- In order to gain insight into innovations and provide the necessary support to teachers in supporting them, principals, inspectors and advisory teachers should attend some of the in-service programmes (1987:48).

Assessment of needs before execution of an in-service education programme is of vital importance to its effective running. Assessed needs give direction to the selection of INSET programmes and also determine their goal. In planning INSET activities, the needs, interests and strengths of participants should be considered (Esu, 1991; Craig et al 1998). In a survey conducted on in-service training needs of teachers in Namibia in 124 schools that was carried out in 1991, it became evident that the largest percentage (29 %) of teachers chose 'teaching methods' as the area in which they most wished to receive training. This was followed by communication skills in English, child development and subject knowledge. Teachers also indicated that they would like to participate in in-service training programmes by contributing to what would be discussed during training. The majority of teachers (61 %) prefer to have training during school holidays that is concentrated in a short period of time (Auala, 1992). According to Ryan (1987), teachers can provide valuable information that can serve as a basis for decisions that can foster more effective, efficient, and pleasurable staff development.

According to a survey conducted in 1991 on in-service training needs of teachers, some recommendations were made for in-service teacher education in Namibia. These included:

- The INSET programme should begin with those who had no in-service training. However, all teachers should eventually be included in the programme
- In-service training should begin in the regions where teachers have received proportionally less training than those in other regions

- The elements of a child-centred philosophy should be at the heart of any in-service teacher-training programme
- Principals, subject advisors and inspectors should receive in-service education before their teachers in new teaching methods, supervision and effective leadership. This training will enable them to become instructional leaders in the schools in which they are responsible (Auala, 2000).

## Support

In-service programmes in Namibia mostly focus on helping teachers in implementing new curricula and new teaching methods in line with educational reforms. Support is essential for the successful implementation of skills that have been learnt. Newton and Tarrant (1992:152) maintain that follow-up support is essential after the programme has finished to maintain the professional empathy it has created. Ongoing support, supervision and networking are also very effective means of maintaining INSET impact and ongoing implementation. Support may come from within the school (principals and other teachers) and from personnel from the Regional Educational Office, such as inspectors and advisory teachers.

Research on innovation and school effectiveness indicates that the principal strongly influences the implementation of change. In-service programmes that are actively supported by the principal, are most likely to succeed (Fullan, 1991). For teachers to take any change seriously, the principal has to support them both psychologically and with resources. In order for principals to be actively involved in the implementation of change, they have to attend workshop-training sessions. In most cases principals suffer from the same problems in implementing a new role as a facilitator of change as their teachers in implementing new teaching roles. They are required to manage change at school level for which they had very little preparation. The psychological problems of change that face teachers are as great as those that

face the principal (Fullan, 1991:76). This is in line with one of the recommendations for in-service teacher education in Namibia contained in a research paper entitled '*Policy Research That Makes A Difference: A Survey Of In-service Training Needs Of Teachers In Namibia*' presented at a workshop in Windhoek in 1992. It was recommended that the most efficient way to mount an in-service programme for teachers in Namibia was to be in three phases:

- Phase one: training of trainers ( regional staff, subject advisors, inspectors and chief education officers) and preparation of training modules
- Phase two: training of school principals
- Phase three: training of teachers in local centres using principals assisted by trainers (Auala, 1992:22).

Despite this recommendation, most INSET programmes in Namibia concentrate on the first and the last phase, leaving out the principal in the process. The principal's role in implementing specific innovations and in changing the culture of the school has even become more critical despite the constraints mentioned above.

As already mentioned, innovation projects having the active support of principals are likely to succeed. The principal's actions carry the message whether an innovation is to be taken seriously by teachers or not. If the innovation is unclear and unstructured, it becomes more difficult for teachers to transform it into a practical reality in the classroom. As Davies (1984) explains, the role of the principal in the implementation of change is to create conditions within the school, which will welcome and support change. A positive school climate is one of the major factors affecting the implementation of change through INSET. The building of collegiality among all stakeholders in the school such as teachers, learners, cleaners and management is fundamental to any change. The principal of a school plays an important role in creating a positive school climate by being supportive.



Teachers have to be encouraged to take leadership roles such as heading a subject department and becoming members of a school board or finance committee (Fullan, 1991; Marsh et al 1990).

Once a favourable atmosphere has been created with the help of the principal, effective teaching and learning can then take place. A positive school culture will enable teachers responsible for a particular subject such as geography to share their individual expertise with one another and not work in isolation. For any change to be effectively implemented through INSET, the culture of commitment to professional development has to be developed.

INSET will not succeed in a school where teachers are disillusioned and have a low morale. Once principals have created favourable school climate, teachers will feel free to communicate with one another regarding their attitude and feelings towards new information and changing roles. New information in a classroom can only be tried out in a safe climate where teachers are open to one another and do not hide their weaknesses and strengths. Davies (1984) argues that strong hierarchical patterns of authority are less conducive to large-scale implementation of change. In schools where authority is placed in a group of professional equals and organised along more participatory and democratic lines, greater chances for change are created.

Closely linked to support, is motivation. If stakeholders involved in the implementation of change are not motivated, the innovation is likely to fail. If the school principal and his/her staff are satisfied with what is happening in the school, it becomes difficult for them to implement any change. For example, if teachers are happy with their classroom practice and are satisfied with the performance of their learners through high examination results, they will see no reason why they have to introduce learner-centred teaching in the place of the teacher-centred approach. In



such instances, the principal can initiate change by motivating his/her staff to implement the new innovation. Teachers who attend courses on the implementation of new teaching methods have to be motivated and in turn try to motivate other colleagues. A motivated principal will always play a supportive and co-ordinative role. He/she will work closely with teachers by encouraging them and sharing responsibilities (Pratt, 1980).

Closely related to motivation is the interest that stakeholders show in an innovation. If the principal and his/her staff are not interested in an innovative approach, it becomes difficult to implement new policies. The staff therefore has to show eagerness in trying out new ideas (Pratt, 1980; Marsh et al 1990).

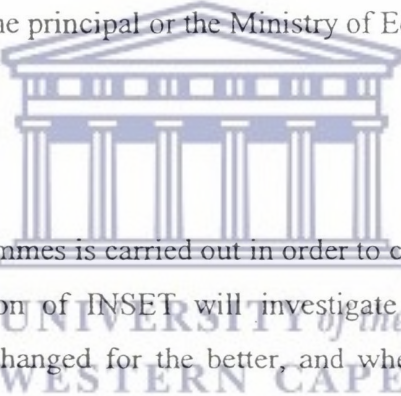
The principal can enhance the quality of the teacher's work and the learner's performance by seeing to it that teachers are provided with adequate resources and sufficient learning materials. His/her role is to see to it that the instructional standards at his/her school clearly specify the school's mission, teaching behaviour expected from teachers and curricular goals.

Teachers can also get support from their peers and mentors in their endeavours to implement skills learnt from INSET programmes into their classrooms. This can take the form of peer coaching and the establishment of study groups with other teachers of similar in-service experiences. Advisory teachers and other personnel from the Ministry can also provide support to schools and teachers in the form of advice and training about instructional practices. Schools also need to be supplied with resources that will enable them to implement instructional goals learnt at INSET programmes. Advisory teachers can also evaluate and monitor schools' academic performances and provide support to teachers to overcome weaknesses (Craig et al, 1998).

Most teachers that I have worked with in the Caprivi region complain of receiving very little support from their colleagues and their principals when they introduce ideas from a workshop. Teachers also receive very little or no support from providers of INSET, such as advisory teachers or inspectors of schools. Teachers are left alone to experiment with new ideas with no follow-up visits from the providers that would familiarise them with the conditions under which INSET learnings have to be implemented.

In Namibia, lack of motivation seems to be one of the factors affecting the successful implementation of change through INSET. After receiving training, teachers are left on their own to implement new ideas without receiving recognition for their efforts either from the principal or the Ministry of Education.

### **Evaluation of INSET**



Evaluation of INSET programmes is carried out in order to contribute to programme improvement. The evaluation of INSET will investigate whether attitudes and practices of teachers have changed for the better, and whether these changes are manifested in classroom and school practices. In evaluating the impact of INSET in the implementation of learner-centred teaching and learning in geography classrooms, one would check and see if learners become active participants in the classroom. Craig et al (1998) argue that evaluations of teacher performance are usually conducted for two reasons: to provide useful information to improve the teacher's instructional practices and to make judgements about a teacher's performance. Evaluation of INSET can be done by fellow teachers through peer coaching which has an advantage of fostering collegiality among staff. In peer coaching, a group of individual teachers can agree to observe each other's class and offer advice for improvement. This is only possible once a relationship of mutual

trust and respect has been developed. According to Craig et al, three steps need to be in place to make coaching/evaluation effective:

- The observation experience needs to be planned beforehand to agree on what the lesson will be about, what the observations will focus on, and how the information will be gathered
- During the observation, sufficient clearly taken notes are recorded in positive terms with a view of supporting the efforts of the teacher
- Observations are shared, often with the observed teacher making a self-evaluation first and then brainstorming possible improvements (1998:121).

As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, this type of evaluation can only take place in schools where relationships of mutual trust and respect prevail. If properly done, this could be the most effective means of improving instructional practice in classrooms. Evaluation and follow-up of an in-service programme and its participants help to sustain the quality of the programme as well as the knowledge and skills that teachers have acquired. If a teacher is given a chance to practise a new skill and receive feedback on his/her performance, it is more likely that his/her behaviour will change.

In order to improve the quality of training, evaluation also aims at detecting defects in a programme. Esu (1991:192) further argues that unless those who organise in-service training visit the teachers in the classroom following the in-service training, little transfer of knowledge takes place. It may sometimes become difficult to link the effect of an INSET programme to the teaching and learning process in a classroom. According to Hofmeyr and Pavlich (1987:91), methods to investigate these should be identified and devised because a positive impact on the quality of education is the primary assumption of INSET programmes. In order to assess the influence that a particular programme has on the performance of teachers in the



classroom and pupil learning, the evaluator could ask teachers for their perceptions about the influence of INSET programme on their teaching and investigate these claims by observation and interviews in order to tap pupils' views on their learning and the teachers' performance. Evaluation will always try to single out areas of INSET activities such as organisation, planning, execution, quality of trainers, opportunities of passing on knowledge from such an in-service training and the attitude of staff members towards changes (Germaine and Rea-Dickins, 1992: 24-26).

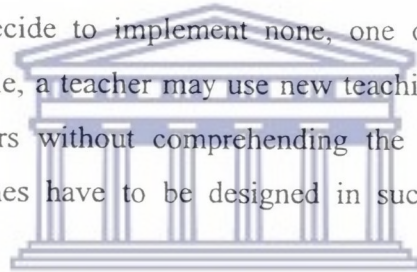
In most schools in Namibia, like the ones in Caprivi region, INSET programmes that are provided by advisory teachers are always not evaluated. If done, evaluations could provide advisory teachers with information as to whether teachers' beliefs, attitudes and practices have changed with the implementation of learner-centred teaching in schools.

### **INSET and educational change**

Schools in Namibia are trying to cope with various problems while still attempting to accommodate a number of highly significant educational changes. These changes require new expertise, which must come from currently serving teachers. Most teachers and teacher educators in Namibia were trained according to the old paradigm of education. At independence it became necessary to train serving teachers towards the new paradigm that puts emphasis on learner-centred education through in-service programmes. It is my experience that teachers in Namibia sometimes greet moving away from the traditional structure of schools to a learner-centred one with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Teachers may not be happy because they are moving away from their comfort zones into the unknown. Some may even decide to hang on to the status quo. It is therefore necessary to provide a

comfortable school climate where teachers will be willing to take risks and try new ideas (Schrenko, 1994:20).

Curriculum change, according to Fullan (1991) occurs along three dimensions, namely the use of new or revised materials, the use of new teaching approaches and the change of pedagogical beliefs. In the Namibian context, change in teaching methodologies allows opportunities for learners to be actively involved, uses various resources and techniques and divides children in small groups and creates individual teaching situations. Change through in-service education occurs along these three dimensions in order to affect the outcome. All three dimensions of change have to be applied together in order to achieve a particular goal. An individual teacher may decide to implement none, one or all three dimensions (Fullan, 1991). For example, a teacher may use new teaching methods and change his/her teaching behaviours without comprehending the beliefs influencing the change. INSET programmes have to be designed in such a way that all three dimensions are addressed.



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It has been argued that the involvement of teachers in educational change is vital to its success, especially if the change is complex and is to affect many settings over a long period of time. Change involves the adoption or abandonment of practices that are familiar and therefore comfortable. As Rudduck (1991) clearly points out, change that denies a person's professional past will not be effectively implemented. Teachers involved in change will need help to be able to see that there is continuity in experience and in the professional knowledge that experience creates. For the involvement of teachers to be meaningful and productive, teachers are not only supposed to acquire new knowledge of curriculum content or new teaching techniques, but also become social learners too. If the significance of the problem or the situation that is defining the agenda for change is recognised by the teachers, they will act as partners in the planning of change. Rudduck (1991) argues that



teachers must feel as individuals and members of a working group that they own and are in control of change. This idea is supported by Henderson and Perry (1981) who maintain that in order for teachers to cope with change, they must not feel that change is something that they cannot control but instead something that they are looking for and welcoming. Attention will not only be focused on teachers' capacity to change but also to their desires for change. Decisions to implement change usually ignore or misunderstand teachers' own desires for change. Implementation will not succeed if for example, teachers do not see the need for a proposed change.

The other problem involving implementation is the clarity of goals. If teachers are expected to improve on their classroom practice, they may not be clear as to what is to be done differently. Gross et al (1971) as cited by Fullan (1991) discovered that most teachers were not clear about the essential characteristics of the innovation they were using. If the envisaged change is much more complex, the question of clarity becomes a huge problem. On the other hand, if change is interpreted in an over-simplified manner, it may create false clarity. For example, new guidelines in the curriculum may be viewed by some teachers as something that they are already doing and this creates a false clarity. Through INSET, teachers will be able to identify and set goals in their attempts to implement an innovation. If changes are not very clear, they may also cause frustration to the teachers trying to implement them.

### **The meaning of learner-centred education in the Namibian context**

Learner-centred education in Namibia has been introduced in keeping with the goals of democratizing education and improving educational quality. A didactic one-way process of information transfer from the teacher to the learner was the norm in teaching and learning. Moving from educating a few in the old system to providing education for all was accompanied by a shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred

teaching methods. The learner-centred approach is a way of teaching that places the activities of the learners in the centre of every lesson. Teachers need to plan for activities that learners will do during the lesson instead of only planning for what the teacher will do and say.

The Ministry of Education and Culture puts emphasis on the quality and meaningfulness of learning. Teaching methods used in schools should strive to encourage and facilitate learning through the learner-centred approach, which implies that:

- The starting point is the learners' existing knowledge, skills, interests and understanding, derived from previous experience in and out of school
- The natural curiosity and eagerness of all young people to learn to investigate and to make sense of a widening world must be nourished and encouraged by challenging and meaningful tasks
- The learners' perspective needs to be appreciated and considered in the work of the school
- Learners should be empowered to think and take responsibility not only for their own, but also for one another's learning and total development and
- Learners should be involved as partners in, rather than receivers of, educational growth (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993a: 60).

In learner-centred education, learners will participate and be active in the learning process. Teachers can facilitate this active learners' role by working with learners either in small or large groups, or pairs, or individually. Teachers can encourage active learner participation by explaining, demonstrating, posing questions, checking for understanding, helping, providing for active practice and problem solving. A learner-centred approach argues that learners learn best when their interests are taken into account. The teacher's responsibility is to discover the

learner's interests and plan learning activities that address and build on these interests. One way of stimulating learners' interests will be to build on their experiences. Experience includes everything from what the child has seen, heard, felt and done. Every child comes to school with a rich store of experiences on which the teacher needs to build.

The Pilot Curriculum Guide for Formal Basic Education defines learner-centred education as an approach in which:

Children learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process, and the teaching methods used should be chosen to encourage the active involvement and participation of the learners. Teachers should structure lessons appropriately for each task. There should be variation in the organization of the class according to groups, larger groups or the whole class. There should be variation between teacher directed, teacher facilitated, and learner directed work, depending on which is the most effective in relation to the learning objectives and content of the lesson (Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, 1996:23).

According to the Pilot Curriculum for Formal Basic Education, learner-centred education demands that gender equity should also be given prominence. Boys and girls will receive equal treatment in the classroom and teachers must guard against favouring either boys or girls. One way of promoting gender equity would be to ensure that both boys and girls are equally represented on the Students' Representative Council.

The Pilot Curriculum for Formal Senior Secondary Education aims to build on and continue with the learner-centred approach as already implemented in the lower grades. It defines learner-centred education as:

Learner-centred education takes as its starting point the learner as an active, inquisitive human being, striving to acquire knowledge and



skills to master his/her surrounding world. The learner brings to the school a wealth of knowledge and social experience gained from the family, the community and interaction with the environment. This knowledge and experience is a potential which can be utilised and drawn upon in teaching and learning. From the same perspective, the learner is seen as an individual with his /her own needs, pace of learning, experiences and abilities, and a learner-centred education must take this into account. In the classroom, learning should clearly be a communicative and interactive process, drawing on a range of methods as appropriate for different groups of learners and the task in hand. These include group and pair work, learning by doing, self and peer-assessment, with emphasis on the supportive and managerial role of the teacher (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993:50).

In the senior secondary phase, the learner is able to share more responsibility for his/her own learning. Learner-centred education involves discipline from within and the creation of an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, where learners, teachers and administrators work together. Classrooms that are orderly, interactive and productive will help each learner to realize his/her full potential.

The Broad Curriculum for the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) is based on learner-centred principles. It outlines learner-centred education as:

...Knowledge is not a static amount of content, but is what the learner actively constructs and creates from experience and interaction with the socio-cultural context. Teaching and learning in Basic Education continually build on the child's experience and active participation, aiming to make learning relevant and meaningful to the child. Students will therefore be prepared to be able to stimulate the natural curiosity and eagerness of young people to investigate and make sense of a widening world through varying, challenging and meaningful tasks. Students will be enabled to organize teaching and learning so that the starting point at each stage of a learning process is each learner's existing knowledge, skills, interests and understanding, derived from previous experience in and out of school. They will be equipped with the knowledge and skills to organize, sustain, and evaluate learning experiences, which are meaningful to the learner (Ministry of Higher Education, Vocational

Training, Science and Technology and Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, 1998:15)

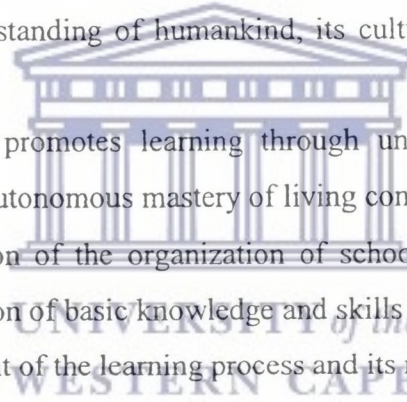
Teaching methods used in the BETD programme encourage participation and lead to reflection in and on practice. Methods used include class visits, demonstration teaching, micro-teaching, team teaching, group work, individual study and tasks, seminars, tutorials and lectures. The teacher educator usually acts as a role model in the attitudinal development of the student. The professionalism shown by the teacher educator will serve as an indicator for the student teacher of the type of teacher the system needs. Students are encouraged to participate in democratic structures of the college.

The selection of teaching and learning materials used in the classroom will be carefully done. If carefully designed, they will meet specific learning objectives and will be both challenging and help learners to understand. Learner-centred education demands that the materials used should be learner-friendly, stimulating and easy to use. The most appropriate learning materials that are in agreement with learning objectives should be used. In some cases, teachers may improvise teaching and learning materials from available and inexpensive objects in the immediate environment such as cardboard, sticks, bottle tops, etc. Learners can also assist in preparing materials based on their experiences and ideas. In the learner-centred approach, the teacher gives the class questions to work on and activities to do with the help of learning aids such as pictures, worksheets, etc. In so doing, learners will be able to find and discuss their own answers to the questions, using their knowledge and experience as well as the teaching aids provided by the teacher.

Regarding discipline, learner-centred education demands that corporal punishment should not be used at all as the Supreme Court has declared it as unconstitutional. It emphasizes that positive discipline can only be established in a school when there is

a supportive atmosphere, where teaching and learning is professionally organized and appropriate learner-centred methods are used.

Teaching methods used in learner-centred classrooms are not supposed to promote memorization and rote repetition but rather encourage learners to think independently and critically for them to be able to identify, analyze and solve problems. Teaching methods that strive at developing confidence in learners are encouraged to enable learners to contribute actively in their societies and participate in governing them. According to the Ministry of Education and culture, teaching must be learner-centred and aim towards:

- 
- An enlightened understanding of humankind, its culture, its traditions, and its history
  - A methodology that promotes learning through understanding and practice directed towards the autonomous mastery of living conditions
  - A general reorientation of the organization of school work with the view to fostering the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills by all pupils
  - Continuous assessment of the learning process and its results
  - Promoting and protecting the fundamental equality of all learners and equity in their access to, their work in, and their benefits from the learning environment and
  - Introducing and encouraging classroom practices that reflect and reinforce both the values and practices of democracy (1993a: 120).

In assessing learners, learner-centred education requires us to look at the role of examinations as the only base for assessing performance. Examinations cannot be completely done away with but should be one of the several tools used in evaluating and assessing progress. Continuous assessment has been introduced in Namibian schools to provide assessment in different skills and the effectiveness of teaching.



Continuous assessment means that the teacher assesses learners continuously during the lessons. The Pilot Curriculum for Basic Education describes the purpose of assessment as giving a reliable picture of the progress of the learner in terms of achieving the basic competencies of the syllabus and life skills.

Continuous assessment in learner-centred education forms an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Its main purpose is to give a reliable picture of the progress of the learner in terms of achieving the basic competencies of the syllabus and life skills. Assessment also provides learners with feedback on how they are progressing and enables them to know their weak and strong points. It also keeps parents regularly informed about the progress of their children and gives suggestions as to how they can support their children's learning activities.

Learner-centred education presupposes that all children can learn and develop, and given the right circumstances, should be allowed to progress through ten years of Basic Education in as near to normal time as possible. It rejects the view that children are empty vessels that must be filled up with knowledge before progressing to the next grade. In learner-centred education it is believed that learners benefit most when they remain with their own age groups. Holding back slow learners may end up harming them than helping them in their development. Likewise, promoting gifted learners above their age group on the basis of academic excellence may lead to impairment. It is possible that learners may not master everything that is taught in a grade but they are likely to develop by going on to a new grade than keeping them in the same grade (Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, 1996:33).

### **Learner-centred education in general**

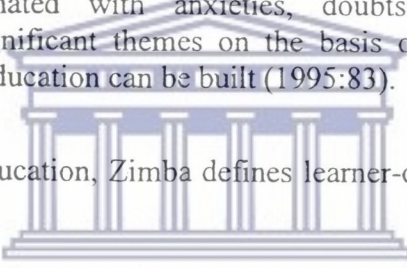
Various misconceptions exist about the term learner-centred education. According to Farrant:

Some people seem to think that it is a kind of child power movement where children virtually control what goes on in the school. They think of it as an over-sentimental attitude towards children that gives them unwarranted and damaging importance in the school. In fact learner-centred education is neither sentimental nor child-controlled. It is simply a realistic response to what we know about children, their development, interests and characteristics (1980:128).

Paulo Freire (1970) as cited by Zimba developed a conception of education that could form the basis for learner-centred education on the grounds that:

Authentic education is not carried on by “A” for “B”, but rather by “A” with “B”, mentioned by the world - a world which impresses and challenges both parties, giving rise to views or opinions about it. These views, impregnated with anxieties, doubts, hopes or hopelessness, imply significant themes on the basis of which the programme content of education can be built (1995:83).

From Freire’s conception of education, Zimba defines learner-centred education as education in which:

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- Teaching and learning are based on students’ experimental, developmental and scholastic background, interests, goals, hopes, aptitudes and learning needs
  - Students are considered as active participants and partners in their own education
  - Students and teachers are co-learners and co-teachers
  - The major task is that of striving for understanding, competence, knowledge, skill, mastery and application, and the quest for excellence
  - The continued mutual and interactive growth, development, learning and intellectual emancipation of students and their teachers are emphasized
  - Students and teachers are supposed to reconcile their different perceptions and views of reality, preoccupations, doubts, needs, problems, hopes and fears and

come up with a negotiated conception of their shared understanding, purposes, visions and goals

- Reflective teaching and learning is not ignored (1995:83).

Once teaching and learning is organized along these lines, the teacher and the learner will make up a team of cooperating individuals whose task will be to facilitate and promote the understanding of the subject matter. The teacher is no longer viewed as the sole provider of knowledge and the learner as the recipient of knowledge but as a constructor of meaningful knowledge. The teacher forms part of the learning process by offering guidance and support to the learners. Entwistle (1970) argues that in any educational activity, attempts should be made to enable the child to understand the meaning of what he is attempting to learn. If the child does not understand what he learns, he will have problems in trying to apply anything that he has learnt outside the classroom situation. The justification of any educational activity that the child has learnt depends upon its relevance for experience outside the context in which it was learned.

By actively participating in the classroom, students gain knowledge and develop democratic habits and become responsible citizens. A learner-centred approach is seen as an extension of democratic practice to the micro-level of the classroom.

Another condition necessary for the child to possess his/her learning is for his/her schooling to relate to his/her own experiences, strengths and weaknesses. This does not necessarily mean the provision of a unique curriculum for every child but rather the educational point of departure for any child must take into account his/her personal history and the cultural privileges or deprivations that have made him/her what he/she is.



Farrant (1980) argues that in a primary school where learner-centred teaching is practised, classrooms will have a lot of playthings in them and children will have a variety of activities to choose from. They will have the freedom to move around in their classrooms and will enjoy themselves as they work in groups. This however does not mean children will do as they please. The atmosphere is always relaxed and friendly and a variety of things in the classroom will always stimulate their natural curiosity. As Farrant (1980: 129) clearly states: “In child-centred education, teachers are certainly not sentimental about their pupils nor do they let them do as they like; but they do respect their pupils’ individuality and try to enable each one to fulfil his potential.”

On the other hand the teacher-centred approach focuses on what is being taught rather than the child who is taught, so that education is seen more as working through the syllabus than trying to help each child develop his potential. Farrant describes the main characteristics of teacher-centred education as being:

- Teachers act as the essential link between the child and what he is learning
- Teachers select what the children learn, the methods by which they learn and the pace at which they learn
- Teachers see their role as communicating knowledge to their pupils
- Pupils get the impression that they can only learn when their teacher is present and
- Pupils are regarded as uniform groups of learners than as individuals with different talents and needs (1980:129).

In teacher-centred education, instruction is directed to whole class and learners sit in regular rows working at the same exercises at the same time. Learner-centred learning is in contrast with the predominantly didactic teaching methods employed in schools. In the past schools were mainly teacher-centred and teaching was

characterised by the phrase 'chalk and talk' (Entwistle, 1970:143). The most active person in the classroom was the teacher and the child's contribution was restricted to answers in response to the teachers' questions.

Teacher-centred education is concerned primarily with the transmission of knowledge and skills from the expert teacher to the apprentice pupil. The emphasis in teaching is on the cognitive and practical domains rather than on the affective. Decisions in the classrooms are entirely taken up by the teacher. Learning is to a large extent passive. The teacher has an impossible task of assessing the needs of every individual learner in the classroom. His/her duty is to instruct and instil predigested skills and knowledge into the learners and to keep learners busy. He/she is the generator of all activities and the controller of all events. Without the teacher, learners will not learn. Learner-centred education on the other hand regards the teacher as propelling the process of learning and acting as a sensitive facilitator. Teachers and learners operate in an interactive two way process with the teacher exercising temporary control of the process while the learners retain the overall ownership of the process. Students are encouraged to participate fully in classroom activities and take responsibility for their own learning. Learners can easily learn from each other and can learn to work as a team or in a group (Brandes and Ginnis, 1996).

Brandes and Ginnis (1996) quoting Bennett (1976:98) contrast the two approaches in the following way:

**Learner-centred education****Teacher-centred education**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Integrated subject matter                              | Separate subject matter                   |
| Teacher as guide to educational experience             | Teacher as distributor of knowledge       |
| Active pupil role                                      | Passive role                              |
| Pupils participate in curriculum planning              | Pupils have no say in curriculum planning |
| Learning predominantly by discovery                    | Accent on memory, practice and rote       |
| Intrinsic motivation                                   | Extrinsic motivation                      |
| Not too concerned with conventional academic standards | Concerned with academic standards         |
| Little testing   | Regular testing                           |
| Accent on cooperative group work                       | Accent on competition                     |
| Teaching not confined to classroom base                | Teaching confined to classroom base       |

**The role of the teacher and learner in learner-centred education**

Instead of diminishing the role of the teacher, as many critics would argue, learner-centred education requires even much more from him or her. The teacher in a learner-centred classroom will have to:

- Prepare work for every lesson
- Have audio and visual aids ready
- Plan activities for the children to carry out
- Prepare remedial mini-lessons
- Prepare tests based on the objectives of the curriculum or syllabus
- Have ready material for able and less able students
- Have assessment sheets ready and assess both written and oral work (Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, 1995:47).



From the above, it becomes clear that learner-centred puts a lot of pressure on the teacher in terms of preparation but at the same time it offers a variety of advantages to the teacher such as:

- The teacher will have time to develop a more personal interest in each pupil and will be able to identify weaknesses and strengths of each and every pupil
- The teacher can easily evaluate how effective the teaching and learning materials are and can change and improve as the need arises
- It enables the teacher to assess learners individually
- Pupils of different/mixed abilities will receive attention that they deserve
- The teacher can plan and teach remedial programs to the less able learners (Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, 1995:25).

Teachers can promote learner-centred education by creating conditions necessary for learning by all students. Once the teacher believes that all children can learn, it becomes a challenge for him/her to provide meaningful experiences that will lead to learning. The challenge that the teacher faces is to provide a variety of experiences on different levels to enable every child to stretch her or his potential. The teacher acts as a skilled mediator who enables pupils to strengthen their thinking and construct new understandings about important problems, concept, and issues by intervening in the students' thought processes. The teacher can therefore maximise student learning by helping students build on prior knowledge. Every student comes to school with prior experiences and the teacher can use this as a bridge to help the student construct meaning. For any new learning to make sense, the learner must make connections to prior knowledge. The teacher facilitates the new learning by providing experiences that will enable students to see relationships. Students can only learn best when they learn to think. The teacher can teach students to use critical thinking skills, which they may need as necessary tools in order to meet future challenges (Schrenko, 1994).

Zimba argues that in learner-centred education the teacher still retains his status as a teacher. When conditions are more conducive for the effective implementation of learner-centred education, the teacher's role becomes:

Largely that of an organizer of instruction in terms of time, environment and resources, guide, counselor, mentor, co-learner, resource person, facilitator, friend and problem-poser. In other words, the teacher assumes the role of an educational leader whose main brief is that of creating conditions for effective learning (1995:84).

Learner-centred education requires the teacher to formulate teaching and learning objectives and plan instructional materials that demand active participation from learners. This puts the teacher in a position where he/she is able to organize learning materials and locate their sources. The teacher also plays a significant role in the creation of physical and social environments that will promote friendly and free learner involvement. In assessing learners the teacher use participatory assessment strategies that take into account all domains of knowledge and levels of understanding (Zimba, 1995).

In learner-centred education, knowledge, skill and experience are important for a teacher to be able to counsel and guide learners. This will make them valuable resources that are creative in teaching who can model independent learning and solve learners' problems. Learners will learn best if they view their teacher as someone who is accessible and regarded by learners as their adult friend who expresses genuine concern for their welfare. As a human being, the teacher will always acknowledge his/her limitations and recognize the need to learn from students and other people. According to Brandes and Ginnis (1996), the teacher should have a degree of sensitivity and perception in order to clarify and identify student needs. He/she has to be capable of divergent thinking and considerable

resourcefulness to find the materials requested by students, which cannot be predicted in advance.

In learner-centred education, the ownership of learning rests with the learner. The teacher only acts as a facilitator and a resource person. Learning is by enquiry and discovery. Learner-centred education requires the teacher to be an effective classroom manager who is able to get the learner's cooperation in carrying out instructional tasks and run the business of the classroom smoothly. For one to manage a classroom assertively and smoothly, he/she needs to have human relation skills, which will reflect his/her ability to direct group learning activities without distracting and confusing learners. Classroom management cannot be used by teachers as a set of prescription to be applied when problems arise. According to Auala and Shaimemanya (1999), the teacher should be able to create a group climate that will support the learning activities he is promoting.

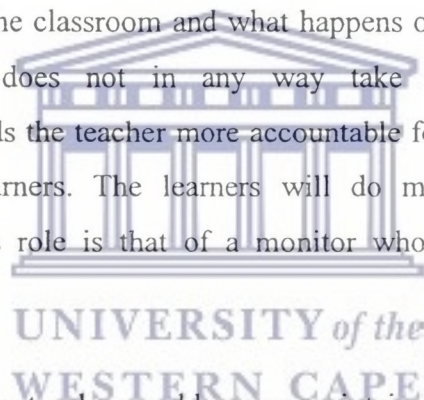
In learner-centred education, Chipeta (1997) as quoted by Auala and Shaimemanya contend that teachers should do the following in order to manage both classroom and class well:

- Create conditions, for example rules, procedures and learning materials desirable for effective instruction
- Regulate pupils' social behaviour through reprimands, praise and calling for attention
- Maintain a clean classroom
- Assert authority over the class by providing clear instructions to be followed
- Draw upon psychological principles of, for example reinforcement to control social behaviour
- Dress the classroom with the appropriate teaching and learning materials
- Respond to pupils constructively



- Know the subject matter
- Have the ability to prepare materials
- Have the ability to deal with problems
- Have the ability to facilitate group-work
- Have an awareness of everything going on in the classroom
- Have the ability to keep pupils busy without interfering with their progress
- Have skill in explaining and questioning (1999:8).

Chaka (1997) contends that the role of the teacher in learner-centred education revolves around offering assistance to learners so that they could see a relationship between what they learn in the classroom and what happens out in the community. Learner-centred education does not in any way take away the teacher's responsibilities but even holds the teacher more accountable for the outcome of the learning experiences of learners. The learners will do most activities in the classroom and the teacher's role is that of a monitor who oversees the whole learning process.



In a learner-centred classroom, teachers and learners maintain a positive relationship that allows them to communicate freely with each other. The performance of learners will be negatively affected if the communication between teachers and learners is poor. The teacher also communicates with the parents to keep them informed about the performance of their children in schools. The teacher can also assist learners in acquiring the necessary social skills that will help learners in resolving conflicts both at school and in the community. In so doing learners will grow up as responsible citizens who will defend the constitution of their country and be in a position to resolve conflicts through negotiations.

The learner's role in learner-centred education remains that of a learner who together with fellow learners and the teacher becomes a co-learner. He/she is able to

construct knowledge, solve problems, grow and develop as an individual with a past, a present and a possible future. The learner is viewed as a person who has feelings, emotions, intentions, goals, aspirations and purposes that are all geared towards the need to change, transform, improve and enhance the quality of his/her life. The learner acts as one of the sources of his/her own learning and academic progress. In order to achieve this status, the learner has to be actively involved in discussions, problem-solving exercises, project work, presentations, field trips and independent enquiry. As Zimba (1995) clearly points out, for a learner to be able to perform his role satisfactorily, he will need the guidance of the teacher and other members of the community as resource persons, a situation that seems to out of reach in most Namibian schools.

### **Group work in learner-centred education**

Learner-centred education techniques are based on getting learners involved in the learning process. This can be achieved by using different teaching techniques such as group work, project work, drama and role-plays. Imasiku defines group work as a:

A technique that uses interactions between learners as part of the learning process. Important social skills are developed as well as what is being learned through the work the group is doing. The teacher can use this technique to share understanding about an issue through facilitating discussion in groups. He/she helps in the process of learning by helping learners to develop skills of finding information, but the learners also seek help or information from each other. The teacher here takes the role of a facilitator, either as a participant in the group or an outsider almost in a consultative role (1998:118).

Group work is regarded as being one of the most important teaching strategies that helps learners to engage in both academic and social life. In order for group work to succeed, Bennett and Smilanich (1994) concur with Johnson and Johnson (1989) that the five basic elements of co-operative learning, namely individual

accountability, face to face interaction, positive interdependence, social skills and processing of group efforts, should be applied in a classroom learning environment.

For group work to function effectively, each learner in a group has to be accountable. If the teacher ignores this when dealing with group work, one or two students will often take over and do all the work and the rest of the group will sit back. This may increase the chances that learners will not work effectively in groups and subsequently the teacher will experience classroom management problems. To make sure that everyone feels accountable in the group, the teacher will inform his/her learners beforehand that anyone from the group can be asked to report back to the whole class on the group's work. The teacher can also use the 'Round Robin' approach, which gives an opportunity to each learner to share his/her thinking with the rest of the group. The questions that the teacher poses to the groups can be framed in such a way to hold most of the learners accountable most of the time. In group work, face to face interaction increases individual accountability because it allows students to work in close proximity.

Teachers in learner-centred classrooms always try to increase chances that will allow students to work together in a constructive manner by helping one another. If learners are given a task to complete in a group, the goal towards which they are working should be clear, meaningful and interesting for them to be actively involved and take the work seriously. If the goals are not clear and meaningful to the learners, they will end up having fun at the expense of the teacher. In group work each learner is assigned a specific role that will ensure that all students are actively involved in the task. The teacher normally takes time and discusses the specific roles assigned to each student in a group for the learners to know how each role is to be carried out. Activities in group work can follow a specific order with each student responsible for one part of the activity and in this way, students will feel more accountable for being involved.



Schmuck and Schmuck, quoting Dewey (1930), described the role of group work as:

The aim of education is to develop socially responsible citizens who can work together to solve social problems. If students are to become socially responsible adults, they will have to participate in planning and evaluating their learning experiences in school. He argued that if children are to learn to live democratically, they will have to experience the living process of democracy itself in the classroom. Life in the classroom according to Dewey, should be a democracy in microcosm (1992:3).

In group work, the classroom represents democracy by enabling students to make choices and carry out projects collaboratively. Students also learn how to relate to people around them, how to respect other people's rights and how to work together rationally. Learners will learn to work with people from different cultural backgrounds and religions. In schools, students will learn behavioural skills that will empower them to play useful roles in society and contribute positively to the productivity of groups. Bennett and Smilanich (1994) describe human beings as being gregarious and always preferring to be part of a group. Teachers and learners can build a sense of classroom and group identity that will enhance a feeling of belonging among students. Group work pays special attention to social and collaborative skills. Teachers will have to become more creative in finding ways to integrate the social dimension of learning into their curriculum.

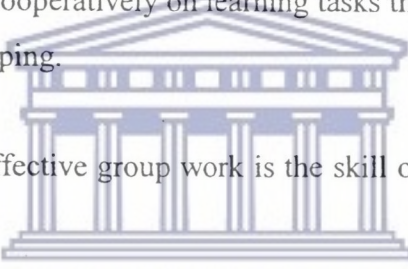
According to Farrant, the social training that learners receive from group learning is valuable:

By working in groups, children learn how to deal with disagreement, to accept others who hold different views, to co-operate in order to achieve a bigger output, and to work as a team. They learn through experience the working of all kinds of government from dictatorship to consensus and thus to value democracy. By working as a team, they learn the sense of belonging that membership of a group gives,

and they learn how to accept in a mature fashion the elation of success in competitive tasks and also the pain of defeat (1980:143).

Group work plays an important part in developing self-concept of individual learners. A learner's self esteem is enhanced through the accumulated bits of feedback that he/she receives from those with whom they come in contact in school. Communication plays an important role in the establishment of a self-concept because it provides a set of common meanings that enables one to see oneself through the eyes of the other person. Schmuck and Schmuck (1992) argue that the presence of other learners during learning has a significant facilitating and enhancing effect on the individual. Students work much faster when they are taught to work interdependently and cooperatively on learning tasks than when no attention is paid to collaboration and helping.

Another important aspect of effective group work is the skill of active listening. As Brandes and Ginnis outline:



One of the ways to show someone that you value him or her is to give them the gift of your full attention when they are talking to you. It is also a fundamental group work skill: if the whole group is listening to each other, there is an atmosphere of cooperation, consideration and mutual regard. Time is saved as clarity is improved, and therefore productivity is increased (1996:35).

Listening is a very important skill that enables all other activities in-group work to run smoothly. No productive and efficient group work can take place without listening skills having been firmly established.

### **Questioning technique in learner-centred education**

Questioning is one of the important elements of learner-centred education. It is a complex skill that requires the teacher not only to use the right type of questions, but

also to redirect questions to other pupils to ensure maximum participation. According to Farrant (1980), questions can be classified as lower order questions based on memory, middle order questions that emphasize comprehension and higher order questions that test mental skills such as analysis and evaluation. Questions can also be classified as open or closed. Closed questions are limited and will demand either right or wrong answers. Open questions on the other hand will assist in showing the understanding that pupils have.

In learner-centred classrooms, teachers usually guard against limiting their questions to a number of learners. It sometimes happens that questions are only directed to learners sitting at the front or to those who put up their hands. Questioning works much better if questions are well spread and challenging to the learners. In classrooms where learners have the freedom, they will also ask different kinds of questions. Children always have a natural curiosity to want to know. This will help the teacher discover the interests and abilities of different learners in his classroom. It also helps teachers to identify lessons that are not well understood by learners and therefore to plan accordingly for revision. When dealing with answers, teachers will always indicate whether answers given by learners are correct or wrong and guard against falling into the habit of answering their own questions.

## **Conclusion**

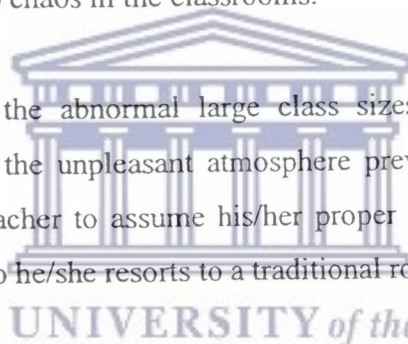
Learner-centred education implies that learners must participate and be actively involved in the learning process. Methods used in learner-centred education encourage learners to think independently and critically and not promote memorization. Learners will always interact with their teachers and fellow learners. The role of the teacher will mainly be that of someone who facilitates the process of learning. The change from teacher-centred to learner-centred education remains a



challenge to many teachers in Namibia. Some teachers may find it easy to adjust to change while others will still stick to the old system.

In Namibia, many geography teachers that I have worked with are faced with a big challenge of moving from teacher-centred teaching to learner-centred teaching. Many of them may still teach in the same way they have been taught regardless of in-service training they have received that emphasizes the move towards a learner-centred environment. They may still practice teacher-centred education, in the belief that learner-centred education brings about disciplinary problems in schools. Many teachers are also of the opinion that learner-centred education lacks commitment to serious learning and leads to chaos in the classrooms.

In the Namibian context, the abnormal large class sizes, the unavailability of instructional materials and the unpleasant atmosphere prevailing at some schools make it difficult for the teacher to assume his/her proper role as described in the preceding paragraphs and so he/she resorts to a traditional role.



According to Van Graan (1998), the majority of teachers in Namibia (about 99%) that she interviewed during her study entitled *Learner-centred education: equal to group work? Findings from Namibian classrooms*, regarded group work as a learner-centred activity. Teachers also mentioned that group work gives learners opportunities to learn from each other and share ideas. Some teachers however indicated that group work does not work properly in their schools because of overcrowded classrooms, weaker learners dodging behind stronger ones and learners not finishing their work because of the high level of noise. Another problem mentioned by the teachers was the problem of language. The school policy in Namibia demands that English is the only medium of instruction from the upper primary onwards. It was observed, according to Van Graan, that learners switched

to one of the Namibian languages as soon as the teacher had moved far enough from their group.

In trying to implement learner-centred education in Namibian schools through INSET, the providers of INSET may need to look at and consider the following elements in their planning: Does the system have enough supervisory staff available to support the trying out of a new instructional approach such as learner-centred education? What measures are in place to ensure that the necessary materials are available and will be continuously supplied to schools to successfully implement what has been learned? Has enough time been made available to supervisors and teachers to become familiar with the new approach?



## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the research paradigm within which this mini-thesis is framed is discussed. The setting, data gathering instruments used and research ethics are also presented.

#### **The research paradigm**

This research has been framed within the interpretive paradigm, which requires researchers to observe and interact with the subjects of their research. Unlike the positivist approach which involves the testing of an hypothesis in order to uncover social facts and where subjects of research are treated like objects, the interpretive approach, with the use of the qualitative research method focuses on the teachers' and learners' perspectives and on the process of classroom and school interaction. Human actions and institutions are seen as social constructions that are created by people and not as products of external forces.

Observation is one important research technique within qualitative research. My observations allowed me to observe how people interact with each other (teacher with learners; learners with learners), how certain kinds of questions are asked and answered in the classroom, the meanings that teachers and pupils give to certain words and actions and how students seem to be affected by the teacher's manners, gestures or comments. Another common research technique in qualitative research is the use of interviews. This method helped me to understand and capture the thinking of the participants from their perspective because in the process of interviewing teachers, assumptions, motives, goals and values were focused upon.



## **The setting**

This study was conducted in four schools in the Caprivi region. I chose this region because as an advisory teacher, I had organised and run workshops for geography teachers in the region, which made it easy for me to investigate the implementation of INSET activities that teachers have been exposed to.

In 1997, a revised grade 9 geography syllabus was introduced in all schools in Namibia. As a result, in-service training workshops were conducted for all grade 9 teachers in the country. Due to the large number of teachers involved, each educational region was represented by an advisory teacher and four teachers who were to be trained as geography facilitators for the junior secondary phase. The selection of these teachers was based on their subject knowledge and good results that they produced. The training took place at the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) in February 1997 and stretched over four days. Participants at this workshop were introduced to the content of the revised syllabus and how it could be taught using the learner-centred approach.

The presentation was done in such a way that participants would always break into small groups and work on specific topics on which to develop lessons that they would later present to the plenary. Groups would usually be provided with wall charts on which they could develop teaching aids and write the possible type of questions that could be asked on particular topics. The presenters made it a point that the participants were always involved in the lessons by allowing them to answer and pose questions. Although the organizers of the workshop provided the facilitators with various teaching aids such as transparencies, worksheets, etc., they were informed to train other teachers back in their regions about how to improvise and develop teaching aids from locally available materials.

After the national training, each advisory teacher had to organize a workshop for all schools with grade 9 in his/her region. The four teachers in this study were trained at a regional workshop that was held for grade 9 teachers at Katima Mulilo Teachers' Resource Centre from 27 May 1997 to 30 May 1997, starting at 07:00 in the morning until 15:30 in the afternoon. This workshop could not be held earlier than this date because of budgetary constraints and could therefore only be conducted in the new financial year, which begins in April.

With the introduction of the revised grade 10 geography syllabus in 1998, a similar trend was followed. The national workshop for advisory teachers and facilitators was held in February 1999 at NIED for four days. After the national training, a regional workshop was conducted at Katima Mulilo Teachers' Resource Centre from 22 June 1999 to 25 June 1999 for all geography grade 10 teachers from 07:00 in the morning to 15:30 in the afternoon. The four teachers in this study were part of the group that was trained at this regional workshop.

The regional training, like the national training for advisory teachers and facilitators, concentrated on the introduction of the revised syllabuses and how it could be presented using the learner-centred approach. Each facilitator (including myself) had to present a theme/s of the syllabus that he/she was most comfortable with. Teachers were divided in groups of four or five and were given exercises to work on and provide answers to the whole group. They were provided with copies of transparencies and worksheets obtained at the national workshop and were advised to make their own teaching aids from available materials in their schools. Teachers were also shown how to design worksheets on different topics. The importance of questioning in learner-centred education was demonstrated by the presenters who asked questions throughout their presentations and encouraged the participants to ask questions when they encountered problems. It was explained to the teachers that they should apply the same technique back in their schools when they present

lessons. Learners should at all times be involved in the lessons. It was also pointed out during discussions with the teachers that a number of factors may negatively affect the use of learner-centred methods in schools. These factors include overcrowded classrooms, lack of resources such as textbooks and teaching aids, and the idea may sometimes not be supported by everyone in the school. Some teachers may be offended by the noise that emerges from classrooms during group discussions.

Caprivi is one of the 13 regions of Namibia and forms the country's finger-like projection, which extends the borders of the country into the centre of Southern Africa. It was named after Count Von Caprivi, a German, who successfully negotiated for the inclusion of Caprivi into German South West Africa in order to gain access to the Zambezi River. Katima Mulilo serves as the region's administrative and commercial centre. The region has one hospital, which is located in Katima Mulilo and 34 clinics and health care centres. Caprivi is a popular tourist destination that provides links to Botswana, Zimbabwe and Zambia. The 1996 Demographic Survey put the population at about 107 900 of which more than 50 % live in rural areas and depend mainly on subsistence farming (Mendelson and Roberts, 1997). The population is concentrated mainly along rivers and roads and that is where most schools have been established. The region has 54 combined schools (which offers some primary and some secondary grades), 31 primary and nine senior secondary schools. Larger rural schools are characterised by a few permanent classrooms and a block or two of thatched classrooms. Smaller schools have only thatched structures. A common factor in all the schools is the lack of adequate facilities and equipment and the shortage of textbooks. The teacher-learner ratio is very low in most schools and the region has a huge surplus of teachers.

The four schools used in this study were selected using purposeful sampling. This enabled me to select a sample I believed would provide the data I needed. Only schools whose geography teachers had participated in INSET workshops were



selected because the aim was to establish the extent to which the implementation of INSET learnings has influenced their classroom practices. Schools whose geography teachers were graduates of the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) were also left out because their training is based on learner-centred principles. The implementation of learner-centred teaching methods would therefore be a result of their pre-service training and not because of INSET. Information on workshop attendance and pre-service training was obtained from the Regional Education Office. One teacher mostly handles geography teaching per school in the junior secondary phase; therefore I conducted interviews with and observed four teachers.

In trying to establish whether the rural-urban variable had an influence in the implementation of learner-centred teaching, two of the schools were in an urban area and the other two were in the rural area. The two urban schools, B and C, were selected from a group of five schools. Two of the five schools were left out because one did not have grade 10 and the teacher from the other school did not attend the in-service training workshop for grade 10 teachers. The other school was purposefully left out because it is a former advantaged school, with all the necessary facilities where learner-centred education would be implemented with ease. The two rural schools were selected from 40 combined and junior secondary schools located in the rural area. Since I did not have a 4x4 vehicle at the time of data collection, all schools located off the gravel roads, tarred road and those at a distance of more than 70 kilometers out of town were left out. This reduced the number of schools from 40 to 10. The names of the remaining schools were written on pieces of paper and the two were randomly picked from the rest.

School A is located about 25 kilometers east of Katima Mulilo. It has a student population of 410 learners. The school does not have a hostel and learners come from villages around the school. The teacher-learner ratio at this school is 1: 20. It

has nine permanent classrooms and five thatched ones. The permanent buildings are in a poor condition with broken doors. Most of the teachers do not live at the school but commute from Katima Mulilo. The school has electricity and a clinic nearby. The geography teacher at the school has Std 10 plus a primary teachers' certificate known as Education Certificate Primary (ECP). He has 12 years of teaching experience.

School B is a junior secondary school that offers grades 8 to 10. It has a student population of 570 learners and 21 teachers. The teacher-learner ratio stands at 1:27. The school has eight classrooms of permanent structure and ten prefabricated classrooms. These classrooms are small and the school management always tries to limit the number of learners to 35 per class. The school does not have a hostel and learners come from the surrounding suburbs. The prefabricated classrooms have been vandalised and do not have electricity. The school does not have a library and library books are normally kept in cupboards. The geography teacher at this school has a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree and a post-graduate education diploma. He has six years of teaching experience.



School C is a secondary school with grades 8 to 12. It was built by the Catholic Mission and was later handed to the government in the 1970s. The school has a student population of 402 learners and 23 teachers, including two volunteers. Most of the learners at this school are girls and the school offers typing and home ecology as fields of specialisation. The school has a hostel for girls that can accommodate about 192 learners. The management of the school is comprised of a principal and two heads of department. The school has 15 classrooms of permanent structure plus a library, science laboratory and specialised classrooms for typing, needlework and home ecology. The buildings are old and need renovation. There is a shortage of school furniture. The teacher-learner ratio is 1:17, which means the school is

overstaffed. The geography grade 10 teacher at this school has a BA degree and a post-graduate education diploma. He has six years of teaching experience.

School D is located about 70 kilometres east of Katima Mulilo at the border between Namibia and Botswana. It has a student population of 479 learners and 18 teachers. The teacher-learner ratio is 1:26. Like school A, it does not have a hostel and learners come from the surrounding villages. The school has thirteen permanent classrooms and because of the large number of learners, grades 1 to 4 learners attend school in the afternoons. At the time when this research was conducted, four additional classrooms were being built and the need for a double session will fall away once these are completed. The geography grade 10 teacher at this school has Std 10 plus ECP. He has nine years of teaching experience.

### Data collection

Data on how INSET influences the classroom practice of teachers was obtained through interviews and observations. Each visit to the four schools followed a common format along the following lines:

- Arrival and introduction to the principal
- Explanation of the purposes of the study to the principal
- Enquiry into general characteristics of the school such as number of teachers and learners, whether the school has double sessions or not, etc.
- Interviews with staff
- Observation of lessons
- Closing meeting with principal, arranging for return visit, if necessary.



## The interviews

As already mentioned, in trying to obtain data on the implementation of change through INSET and its subsequent impact on classroom practice, I interviewed geography teachers in four schools. The interview was designed in such a way as to encompass the objectives of the study. According to Borg and Gall (1989), the interview as a research method is unique as it involves the collection of data through direct verbal interaction between the researcher and the respondent. Bell (1993:91) describes the interview as a conversation between the interviewer and the respondent with the purpose of eliciting certain information from the respondent. Another advantage of the interview is its adaptability.

In order to meet the specific objectives of the study, I designed an interview guide (Appendix B) that listed the desired sequence in which the questions were asked during the interview. The order was important in establishing an easy relationship with the interviewee. The questions in the interview schedule concentrated mainly on the teachers' understanding of learner-centred education and the factors that influence its implementation such as support and the availability of teaching and learning materials. These questions were chosen because they reflect the type of INSET activities and key elements of learner-centred education that the sampled teachers were exposed to.

In this study I made use of the semi-structured interview by asking a series of structured questions and then probed more deeply using open-ended questions. Semi-structured interviews have an advantage of being pre-planned while still allowing the interviewee to express his opinions and give reasons behind them. In these interviews I tried not to bias the teachers' responses by hinting or using non-verbal clues that might have suggested a particular response.


Each interview lasted about 35 to 45 minutes and was conducted in the afternoons so as not to disrupt the teachers' normal teaching activities. The interviews were held at the teachers' respective schools. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Borg and Gall (1989) cite several advantages of using tape recorders in recording interviews. The most important one is that the interviewer cannot record selected data that favours his biases. A tape recorder can be played back more than once and can be studied much more thoroughly. It is also possible for any other person to evaluate and classify the data. It also speeds up the interview process because there is no necessity for extensive note taking which disrupts the effectiveness of communication between the interviewer and the respondent. Another disadvantage of note taking is that respondents may be annoyed if their answers are not written down. The taking of notes may also upset interviewees in situations where they are asked to reveal sensitive or confidential information.

### **The observations**

Most researchers advocate data collection by more than one method, a process called triangulation. In order to uncover additional data on how geography teachers have implemented learner-centred teaching and learning in their classrooms, interviews were supplemented by observations. Each of the teachers interviewed was observed in his classroom. Although teachers were informed beforehand about the purpose of the research, I withheld information on the exact nature of observational data that I was looking for. Had teachers learnt about the purpose of the observational study beforehand, they would have increased the frequency of teacher-learner interactions, which might not have represented their actual classroom behaviour and therefore possess little or no validity.

Due to time constraints, each teacher was only observed once. In all cases, observations were done after the teachers had been interviewed. I constructed an observation schedule (Appendix C) to facilitate the recording of data. During observations, I concentrated on interactions that took place between teachers and learners and between learners themselves. I also concentrated on issues such as classroom organisation, how the teacher asked questions, how the learners responded to questions, questions asked by the learners, the use of group work or pair work, the use of materials and how learners behaved in the classroom. I chose these categories because learner-centred education in Namibia is based mainly on these key issues and this is what the sampled teachers have been exposed to at INSET workshops. After listing the observational factors mentioned above, I left enough space to write a few descriptive words to indicate the presence, the absence or the occurrence of a phenomenon.

### Research ethics



In the Caprivi region where this research was conducted, visits from Ministry officials are regarded as inspections therefore I tried to distance myself from this perception. This I did by fully explaining the nature and purpose of the research to the participating schools and teachers and the possible use to which the data would be put. Research subjects were told at the outset as to who would have access to the data. As an official from the Ministry, it was clear that some teachers were afraid to make negative comments about INSET programmes to which government was committed. Before conducting research in the four schools, a letter specifying the objectives of the study was presented to schools and teachers with the purpose of making it clear that the research was not an inspection.

The letter of access (Appendix A) indicated that the investigation would be carried out in connection with a degree course that could yield useful information about the



present form of in-service training workshops. One ethical consideration that I took into account was to obtain the consent and co-operation of teachers who assisted in investigations. As Cohen and Manion (1994) clearly point out, the principle of informed consent arises from the subject's right to freedom and self-determination. Consent therefore protects and respects the rights of self-determination, which allows the participant the right to refuse to take part or to withdraw once the research has begun.

Each participating teacher was given a copy of the form of consent (Appendix D) for his signature. Another ethical consideration was the right of participants to remain anonymous. Anonymity implies that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity. In this mini-thesis, pseudonyms have been used for teachers and schools. Schools are identified as A, B, C and D. Teachers are usually referred to as teacher from school A, from school B, from school C and from school D. The last ethical consideration that I took into account is the one of confidentiality. As a researcher, although I may be able to identify participants from the information provided, I will in no way make the connection publicly known. During the process of data collection, I explained to the teachers what the meaning and limits of confidentiality were in relation to this study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

In this chapter, the data obtained from interviews and observations will be presented and analyzed. The nature of results from interviews and observations differ considerably and therefore the presentation and analysis of the two will be done separately. The results from interviews are analyzed first. In some cases, the results are presented in the form of tables with explanations.

#### THE INTERVIEWS

In this section, the interview questions and a summary of the teachers' responses to the questions will be presented.

**In your opinion, what is the difference between teacher-centred and learner-centred education?**

This section summarises the teachers' views on the differences between learner-centred and teacher-centred education.

Table 1 summarises how teachers characterised teacher-centred education.

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Teacher giving information          | 3 |
| Teacher fully involved              | 1 |
| Learners as passive listeners       | 2 |
| Learners not actively involved      | 2 |
| Teacher as controller and organizer | 1 |

All four teachers interviewed gave the differences between the two in terms of teachers' and learners' roles in the production and acquisition of knowledge. Three of the four teachers interviewed were of the opinion that in teacher-centred education, the teacher is responsible for collecting and giving information to the learners and has to keep them busy. The learners are regarded as people who only receive what the teacher has prepared. Two of the teachers pointed out that with teacher-centred approach, the involvement of learners in the lesson would be very poor. The teacher will be talking all the time and learners will only be listening. Learners will be passive and bored and in some cases, some may even sleep.

The teacher at school A had this to say: "...teacher-centred method whereby you will find that is only the teacher who is giving the information – the teacher who is fully involved ...only the teacher talking and the learners are listening." One teacher at school C said that in a teacher-centred education system, teachers and learners would follow a structured curriculum. The teacher is regarded as a source of knowledge and the learner as the recipient of a structured curriculum. One teacher at school B said that a teacher-centred approach is geared more towards teachers than learners. The teacher will control and organize everything in the classroom. The teacher will take all the decisions in the classroom. Learners cannot learn without the teacher.

On learner-centred education, the following were identified as the most common characteristics:

- learners participate actively
- learners get involved
- teachers facilitate
- teachers assist
- learners ask questions



- learners help other learners
- learners as initiators.

All four teachers were of the opinion that in a learner-centred approach, learners will participate actively in the lesson. One teacher at school B said, although learners may still get assistance from teachers, they become active participants in the lesson. According to the teachers at schools A and B, with a learner-centred approach, learners are not passive listeners but they get fully involved in the lesson.

Three of the four teachers pointed out that in a situation where learner-centred methods are used, the role of the teacher will be that of a facilitator. Unlike in a teacher-centred system where the teacher does everything for the learners, with learner-centred education, the teacher only facilitates the process of learning. The learners will participate and do most of the activities in the classroom. In doing the activities, the teacher will only check and see if they are doing the right things. The role of the teacher becomes that of a monitor who oversees the whole learning process. Two of the teachers also viewed the role of the teacher as being that of someone who offers assistance to his learners. The teacher at school D said: "so the teacher in this learner-centred approach would just assist the learner here and there - but the focus would be on the learner."

Contrary to teacher-centred education where the teacher does all the talking, with learner-centred education, according to the teacher at school D, learners are given opportunities to ask questions in class and even make comments. He was also of the opinion that the learner-centred approach makes it possible for learners to assist others who may have difficulties with the learning content. According to him learner-centred education gives room for students to interact with one another.

The teacher at school C said that with learner-centred approach, the learner would act as an initiator, someone who would go out in the field and explore. He went on to say that whatever activities may be embarked upon, the learner would be in the forefront and the teacher will only provide assistance. According to the teacher at school D, learners can be given projects to complete or topics to research on and later report to the whole class. In this way, the learner acts as his own source of learning and academic progress and only receives guidance and assistance from the teacher.

**Do you really see the need to change from teacher-centred to learner-centred education?**

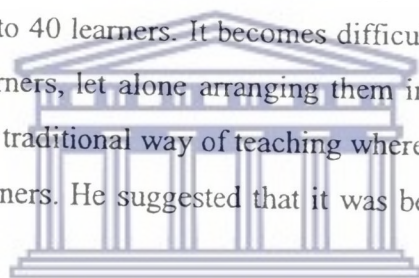
In this section teachers were asked to give their views as to whether there was a real need for change from teacher-centred to learner-centred education.

Three teachers felt that there is a need to change from teacher-centred methods to learner-centred teaching and learning methods. One teacher at school A said he regarded the move as a very positive one because the knowledge that a learner acquires in school can be applied in the real life situation. He said this was better off compared to teacher-centred education that only aimed at the end of year examinations. The teacher at school C also saw a need to change from teacher-centred to learner-centred education because the new approach puts the learner in the forefront with the aim of developing inquiry and problem-solving skills. The teacher at school B also felt that there is a need to change from the old system to the new one because it allows learners full participation and involvement in the classroom. According to him, learner-centred education accords learners enough time to do and complete their work.

One teacher (at school B) felt that there is no need to change from teacher-centred education to learner-centred education. He cited problems of overcrowded classrooms among those that hinder the smooth implementation of the system. He said:

I think learner-centred is not very conducive as far as grouping is concerned whereby a teacher is having forty learners or thirty five learners, it is very difficult to group them - so it is very important if we go back to our traditional teaching whereby a teacher is conveying information.

According to him, it is very difficult to implement learner-centred education in schools because of overcrowded classrooms. Group work cannot work in classrooms with about 35 to 40 learners. It becomes difficult for the teacher to give individual attention to learners, let alone arranging them in groups. He was rather more comfortable with the traditional way of teaching where the teacher provides all the information to the learners. He suggested that it was better to revert to the old system.



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**In what ways, if any, have you changed to incorporate learner-centred teaching and learning in your lessons?**

In this section teachers were asked to indicate if they have in any way changed to include learner-centred teaching in their lessons.

The teacher at school A said although he is now using learner-centred teaching methods, he feels some topics are new and difficult for learners, especially those in rural areas. He was of the opinion that some topics can be better taught using the teacher-centred method. He was of the opinion that a combination of both learner-centred and teacher-centred teaching methods can be used depending on the topic of the lesson. The teacher at school C said with the implementation of learner-centred



education, he needs more time to prepare materials for his lessons. He gave an example of worksheets that he develops and uses that allows learners to get involved in the lesson. The teacher at school D said he is trying his best to use learner-centred methods in his lessons but not without some constraints. The biggest problem is the non-availability of resources in schools. The system can be applied in topics like climatology but the problem will be the unavailability of instruments, which learners could use to take readings of weather elements.

The teacher at school B was not sure whether he has completely changed to incorporate learner-centred methods in his lessons but said he uses a combination of both learner-centred and teacher-centred methods in his presentations. This he does by giving written exercises and asking questions.

**In which geography topics, if any, do you mostly apply learner-centred teaching and learning?**

In this question, teachers were asked to identify topics that can be presented through the learner-centred approach.

Two teachers were of the opinion that a learner-centred approach can easily be used in the section on climatology because of the practical nature of the topic. The section involves activities that learners can easily identify with. Learners can be sent out in the field and take temperature and rainfall readings and later report back to the class. The teachers at schools A and D mentioned population geography as one area where the system can be easily implemented. The teacher at school A said this topic involves practical things that are familiar to learners. He mentioned examples of rural-urban migration as being very common. Most learners have had families that have migrated to towns and cities and are therefore in a position to know the disadvantages of rural-urban migration. For example, their friends and relatives who

have migrated to towns normally face problems of unemployment and end up living in squatter settlements.

A teacher at school D indicated that learner-centred teaching methods could be used in map work. This is possible because teachers can produce worksheets that will allow learners to work in pairs and answer questions based on map evidence. One teacher at school B thought learner-centred teaching methods are more applicable in ecology. Learners can easily identify with the themes in this section because it deals with their environment. Furthermore, learners can participate in activities such as the planting of trees around the school and in issues dealing with pollution.

**To what extent is your learner-centred teaching a direct result of in-service education?**

In this section teachers were requested to give their views on what role in-service training workshops has played in the implementation of learner-centred education.

Three teachers strongly agreed that workshops have had an influence in the implementation of learner-centred teaching. One teacher at school A expressed it this way:

I think our workshops ...have helped us much in terms of the way we have to present our lessons. You see since this new learner-centred just came in, most of us the current teachers - we were learning that time when there was still teacher-centred so most of the workshops that our advisory teachers are giving us, including our facilitators when they attend workshops at NIED and so on, they are really helping us. They are coming with ways on which we should move away from teacher-centred to learner-centred. By that I mean they are very important.

The teacher at school D said that workshops have influenced his implementation of learner-centred teaching to a greater extent because difficult topics are discussed at these workshops. Teachers are also given extra materials that they can use when they go back to their schools. He said when he goes back to his school, he normally makes copies of these extra materials and distributes them to his teachers. One other good thing about the workshops is the sharing of ideas and knowledge that takes place among teachers. This benefits him a lot and makes it easy for him to implement learner-centred methods. Another teacher at school C said he had also benefited a lot from in-service training because he has now acquired the skills of compiling worksheets which learners can use when they do fieldwork.

One teacher at school B was not sure whether he had benefited from the workshops that he had attended. He said he had tried to implement some ideas that he obtained at workshops and was not sure whether he had succeeded. His biggest problem was the old textbooks that they have at their schools while at the same time reference was made to other books at workshops.

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**What support do teachers need in the implementation of learner-centred education?**

- a. from principals?
- b. from educational authorities/ advisory teachers?

This question was divided into two sections. Teachers were requested to give views on the type of support that they would require from principals and from educational authorities, such as advisory teachers.



As mentioned in the preceding chapters, programmes having the support of principals are more likely to succeed. One teacher at school B felt that principals could offer academic guidance to their teachers. For principals to know how their teachers are progressing with learner-centred system, they have to visit them in their classrooms to see what is actually taking place. In the process of visiting teachers in their classrooms, principals will be in a position to identify shortcomings experienced by their teachers. Teachers were of the opinion that principals could support them by creating a positive school climate within which new ideas could be tried. This teacher was of the opinion that in some cases principals can also offer demonstration lessons so as to have an idea of what the system requires. The teacher at school A, who said principals could relieve absentee teachers by taking over their classes and keep learners busy, echoed this. He was however quick to point out that for principals to be able to do that, they have to attend some of the training workshops that will equip them with the requirements of learner-centred education. He complained of getting very little support because people in management are not qualified geography teachers and are hesitant to visit him in his class. Two teachers were of the opinion that principals can support them by providing learning and teaching materials. The teacher at school D said:

I think principals have got a very big role in this learner-centred method - like now we need to order some of the maps - the principal must give us money to order some maps - wall maps or so that we can use in geography or either buy some of the books... we need a very big help from them.

In addition to teaching and learning materials, the teacher at school C said that principals could assist their teachers by reducing the number of learners in classes. Overcrowded classrooms are not conducive to learner-centred approach and teachers will have little time to spend on individual learners. He mentioned that some classes at his school might have up to forty learners.

All four teachers indicated that they require some form of support from advisory teachers. The most common ones mentioned were:

- visits by advisory teachers
- run workshops for teachers
- provide resources to schools.

All the teachers interviewed felt that advisory teachers can support them in the implementation of the new approach by regularly visiting schools. One teacher at school C said visits by advisory teachers would boost their morale. If need be, according to one teacher at school A, principals can invite advisory teachers to their schools so that they could share ideas with teachers on how best to present lessons. The teacher at school D had this to say: "we need them to visit us regularly or every now and then to come and see our work so that we can get in tune with all programmes of learner-centred method". He emphasized the need for follow-up visits by advisory teachers after a workshop has been conducted. This would give advisory teachers an idea of the conditions under which that which is learnt on INSET courses is implemented in schools.

Three of the four teachers mentioned the need for advisory teachers to organize regular workshops for teachers. According to the teacher at school B, most teachers in the region lack the necessary knowledge and experience to implement learner-centred teaching methods. Teachers have learnt about learner-centred teaching in workshops that are usually held once in a year. Regular workshops will therefore address these shortcomings and will enable teachers to attempt the new approach with confidence. One teacher had this to say:

I would urge advisory teachers to be calling teachers for workshops because they are very helpful. Because most teachers do not have the necessary knowledge...appropriate experience in the subject

especially when it comes to the implementation of learner-centred teaching methods.

The teacher at school A suggested that workshops could be organized earlier during the first term so as to assess the previous year's examination results and plan accordingly. Two teachers were of the opinion that advisory teachers can supply teaching and learning materials to schools. The teacher at school D said most principals do not have materials at their disposal and in such cases, advisory teachers need to offer assistance.

### **How does the availability of resources in your school affect the implementation of learner-centred education?**

In this section teachers were asked to give their views on how resources affect the implementation of learner-centred education in their schools.

The following resources were mentioned as important for learner-centred education:

- textbooks
- atlases
- worksheets
- overhead projector
- chalkboard
- globes
- libraries
- maps
- printed media.

All four teachers interviewed were of the opinion that the non-availability of resources is one of the factors that makes the implementation of learner-centred



education difficult. According to the four teachers, there is a strong link between learner-centred education and resources. They strongly believe that learner-centred education cannot be implemented if resources are not available in schools. This is how one teacher at school D expressed his views:

I think we have a very big problem at our schools ... if you want to make a worksheet or you want to get a picture from the textbook, you can't just get it directly from there - we don't have machines whereby you can just make photocopies - so it needs a lot of time. Some of us are not good in drawing - so it gives us a very big problem to get a picture that is similar to the one that you want to copy from the textbook. So there are no machines that can help us in the process and also we don't have enough textbooks in schools - also we don't have enough atlases - we don't have those other things that can help us in the process - that is where we have got a big problem.

The most common resource mentioned by the teachers was textbooks. Teachers at schools B and C felt that their schools do not have enough textbooks for all the learners. The teacher at school B went on to say that some of the textbooks in schools are so thin and outdated and therefore do not have activities for learners and this makes it difficult for them to implement learner-centred education. Two teachers also felt that atlases are also needed in geography lessons if they are to teach using the learner-centred approach. Like textbooks, most of their schools do not have atlases.

According to the teacher at school A, most schools in the region do not have libraries and for those who do, these libraries are not well equipped to enable learners to do projects or research. The libraries, according to him, are stocked with a lot of fiction books that can only be used by English teachers and learners. He also mentioned the use of globes in geography lessons as necessary for the implementation of learner-centred education.

One teacher at school B mentioned that his school does not even have chalkboards at the section where he is based. This makes it difficult for him to implement the learner-centred approach because he cannot even write on the chalkboard. Teachers normally use wall charts if they want to write anything. He also mentioned that his school does not have a single overhead projector and his lessons do not progress in a way that he would have liked them to. Although his school has some maps, they are so old and outdated and do not meet the syllabus requirements.

**Is the atmosphere prevailing at your school conducive to the implementation of learner-centred methods? If yes, how?**

In this section teachers were asked to indicate how the atmosphere prevailing at their schools influenced the implementation of learner-centred education.

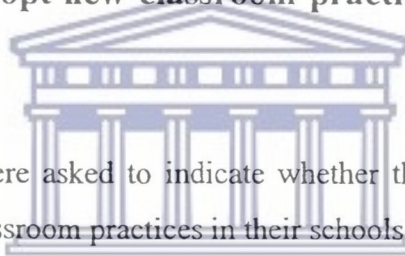
Two teachers said that the atmosphere prevailing at their schools is conducive to the implementation of learner-centred education. The teacher at school A cited an example of the excellent cooperation that exists between him and the English teacher. This teacher had arranged with the English teacher to use some topics from geography in his reading lessons. This makes it easier for learners during the geography classes because these topics will no longer be new to them. The building of collegiality across all stakeholders in the school is fundamental to any change. The teacher at school D said the atmosphere at their school was also conducive to the implementation of the new approach:

I think the atmosphere is conducive at our school because ... all teachers know what is learner-centred and then they are using the learner-centred approach in their subjects and in their periods - so there is no problems - it is supported by everybody.

Two teachers said the conditions at their schools were not conducive to the implementation of learner-centred education. The teacher at school C attributed this

to the abnormal pupil-teacher ratio at their school. He also said that the type of benches that are in their classrooms make it difficult for them to apply the system. They have long benches that cannot be easily moved to make room for groupwork activities. He was supported by the teacher at school B who said: "No, the classrooms we are using are broken especially during the windy days and rain - the nature of the school itself - the setup of the school - is not very conducive for learning." In conclusion, he said during the exchange of classes, a teacher has to walk a distance of about 200 metres from one class to another. This consumes a lot of their time and negatively affects their teaching.

### **Do you feel free to adopt new classroom practices and materials in schools?**



In this section teachers were asked to indicate whether they felt at ease with the implementation of new classroom practices in their schools.

All four teachers indicated that they have no problems with the implementation of the new approach. However, three teachers mentioned that the implementation of the approach depends on the provision of resources to schools. All of them see a strong link between resources and learner-centred education. As already mentioned, teachers complained of not having sufficient resources in their schools that were necessary for the implementation of learner-centred education. This is what the teacher at school C said: "Well, I am free to adopt it as long as materials and relevant support is there. They won't be any problems trying the method."

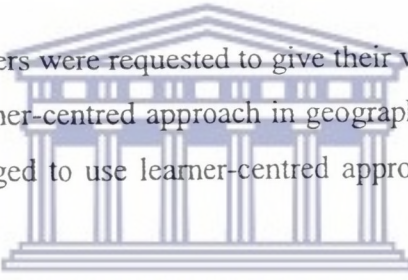
Although mentioning the provision of resources as a condition for the implementation of the new system, the teachers at schools A and B pointed out that they are prepared to improvise and use alternative resources. The teacher at school B also mentioned the lack of motivation as one of the factors that makes it difficult



for them to implement the new system. He said there is no encouragement and motivation from their principals. Principals are in a better position to initiate change by motivating their staff to implement learner-centred education. After receiving training on the implementation of the new approach, teachers are left on their own to implement new ideas without receiving recognition for their efforts from their principals. The teacher at school C feels that he is free to implement the new system because it has a lot of advantages for him and his learners.

### **What motivates you to incorporate the learner-centred approach in your geography lessons?**

In this question, teachers were requested to give their views on what motivates them to implement the learner-centred approach in geography lessons. Most teachers felt that they are encouraged to use learner-centred approach in geography because of the following:

- 
- the practical nature of the subject
  - full participation of the learners
  - develop inquiry and problem solving skills
  - knowing the environment in which learners live.

Two teachers said the fact that geography is a practical subject motivates them to use learner-centred teaching methods in their geography lessons. Most of the topics covered in the subject require learners to move out of the classroom and do observations in the field. The teacher at school A said geography covers aspects of everyday life and learners need not depend on what is written in the textbooks. He gave examples of sections in climatology where they are expected to know the causes of rain and the influences of air pressure. The teacher at school D said that in geography lessons, learners become fully involved and participate. In treating

sections on temperature and rainfall, learners can be given instruments to go out in the field and take readings.

The teacher at school C said he uses learner-centred teaching methods in geography because it develops problem-solving skills in them. Learners become actively involved and are not only recipients of the learning content. This, according to him will enable learners to remember what they have learnt. The teacher at school B echoed the same sentiments and said the new approach allows learners to be active and participate in the lesson. In so doing their linguistic abilities are enriched and the presentation of lessons progresses smoothly. He sometimes organizes debates and discussions in geography lessons.

### Concluding remarks

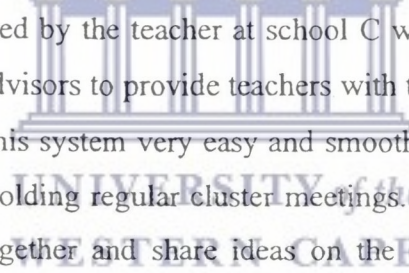
As a last question, teachers were asked to give any concluding remarks. The most common ones mentioned were:

- require more visits by advisory teachers
- ministry to supply materials to schools
- communication between advisory teachers and teachers
- holding of regular cluster meetings
- learner-centred education not suitable for developing countries.

In their concluding remarks, two of the four teachers interviewed were of the opinion that advisory teachers should undertake various visits to the schools. The learner-centred approach is a new system and most of the teachers are not used to it. According to one teacher at school C, most of them still make mistakes and through regular visits, advisory teachers will help them in different areas so that they can get used to the new system. The teacher at school B also mentioned that officers at

Regional office seldom visited teachers in their working environments. He gave an example of teachers in rural schools that are not always visited by advisory teachers probably due to lack of transport. He also cited the issue of lack of communication between advisory teachers and teachers as hampering the successful implementation of the learner-centred approach. It is only through working together, according to the teacher at school D, that teachers will get used to the new system.

Three teachers felt that the advisory teachers and principals have to supply resources to teachers in order for the system to succeed. The teacher at school A mentioned that the use of a chalkboard alone is not enough with learner-centred approach. The Ministry could meet them halfway by providing resources such as textbooks, maps and atlases.



This idea was emphasized by the teacher at school C who said: “a request to both principals and subject advisors to provide teachers with the materials that will make the implementation of this system very easy and smooth.” The teacher at school A mentioned the idea of holding regular cluster meetings. Teachers from a cluster of schools would come together and share ideas on the implementation of learner-centred education. This will be very helpful to teachers who had not attended in-service training workshops and those who have been trained in the old system to be introduced to the idea of learner-centred education. As a concluding remark, the teacher at school B said: “...I would like to appeal to our authorities or the ministry itself, that learner-centred is well better off in developed countries.” By implication, according to him, learner-centred education works well in developed countries where schools have all the necessary resources required for the implementation of the new approach. In countries like Namibia with its scarce resources, the teacher was of the opinion that the old system would work much better.

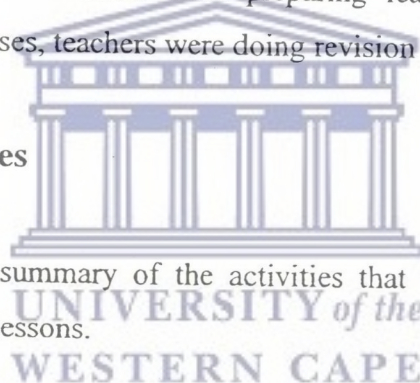


## CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

Classroom observations were done in the four schools in the study in the middle of October 1999. Teachers were observed in order to see how learner-centred teaching methods were being implemented. Observations were done in geography lessons and each lesson lasted for 45 minutes. Each of the four teachers was only observed once. Six key items were selected and focussed upon. As has been explained in the chapter on methodology, these were some of the major issues around which learner-centred education was modelled during the INSET training workshops. These were classroom activities, teachers' and learners' role, questioning, use of materials and classroom atmosphere. Teachers were preparing learners for the end of year examinations. In all cases, teachers were doing revision lessons.

### Classroom activities

This section gives a summary of the activities that teachers and learners were engaged in during the lessons.



In three of the four schools, the most common activity observed was the teacher lecturing the learners and writing the main points of the lesson on the chalkboard. The lessons were introduced by means of asking questions and when learners responded, the answers were written on the chalkboard. At the end of the lessons, the teacher summarized the main points of the lesson on the chalkboard. In most cases, learners sat and listened attentively to the teacher and did not engage in any group activities. There was very little interaction between the teachers and the learners. The only dialogue occurred when questions were posed and learners had to respond.

At school A, learners sat in rows and all faced the chalkboard. They were not given any form of activity to work on, either in pairs or in small groups. For most of the period, they sat quietly and listened to the teacher. The only time when learners participated in the lesson was when they responded to the teachers' questions. The teacher would sometimes provide the answer if none came from the class. The same trend was observed at schools B and C where learners sat in an orderly way and listened to the teacher. Teachers at these three schools did not engage their learners in any group work activity or class discussions.

At school D, although learners sat in groups of four, there were no group activities whatsoever. The teacher was revising the section on cross-sections, and throughout the lesson, learners worked individually in finding answers on topographical maps. When individual learners experienced difficulties with some questions based on the map, the teacher went to the groups and assisted the individual learner. It was surprising to note that even at this school where learners sat in groups, no interaction took place between learners. Throughout the lesson, learners could not communicate with one another and could not get assistance from their peers. There were no discussions whatsoever. The teacher did not use this technique, which could have assisted learners to share understanding of issues through discussions. The teacher's role in this regard would have been that of a consultant or a participant in the groups. Towards the end of the lesson, learners were asked to draw cross-sections in their exercise books.

### **Teacher's role in the classroom**

This section summarises the role played by the teachers during the lessons.

In three of the four schools, the teachers' role centred on lecturing. As mentioned in item one above, the learners sat quietly and listened to the teachers lecturing at

them. Instead of being facilitators, mentors and resource persons, the teachers in these schools acted as the sole providers of knowledge. The knowledge and skills that learners bring to the classroom, which could be developed further by the teacher, were completely ignored. The second most common activity was the asking of questions. Questions were commonly used in the introduction and throughout the whole lesson. In all cases, questions were directed at the whole class.

It seemed to me that teachers in all the schools did very little to motivate those learners who did not show interest in the lesson. At school D, the teacher's role was concentrated on asking questions only. Learners who did not respond to the teacher's questions were completely left on their own. The teachers did nothing to encourage these learners to participate in the lesson. The only form of support shown by the teacher was when he helped individual learners who seemed to experience problems in getting the correct answers.

### **Learner's role in the classroom**

This section describes the role played by learners during the lessons.

Table 2 summarises the learners' role in the classrooms.

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Doing activities                  | 1 |
| Responding to teacher's questions | 4 |
| Asking questions                  | 1 |

In all four schools, the most common activity that learners were engaged in was responding to the teachers' questions. At schools B and C, whenever the teacher asked a question, the class answered as a group. However, the teacher at school B was quick to respond to this trend and encouraged his learners to put up their hands



so that each could get a chance to answer a question. Only those learners who raised their hands were asked to provide answers while the rest of the class was passive. At school B, it was also observed that whenever a learner gave a wrong answer, the class would show disapproval by groaning, the teacher would then point at another learner to give the correct answer. If learners failed to give the correct answer, the teacher would do so.

At school D, besides responding to the teacher's questions, learners were also involved in other activities. In treating cross-sections, the teacher drew a graph on the chalkboard and picked one learner from the class to plot the information. When a learner made a mistake, the teacher would ask for volunteers from the class to assist. Towards the end of the lesson, learners were given an exercise to draw cross-sections in their books.

In all three schools, learners responded to the teachers' questions only. Learners were not involved either in discussions, problem-solving exercises or presentations. It was only at school D where one learner asked a question. In learner-centred education, learners can also ask questions. This will help the teacher to identify parts of the lesson that are not well understood. After the teacher had explained that a population pyramid can be divided into three age groups, namely: the young who are between 0-15 years, the working group between 16-64 years and the old who are 65 and above, one learner seemed to be puzzled and asked: "How old is the president? Why is he still allowed to work if his age does not fall within the working group?" The teacher did not want to respond to this question but invited the class to explain to their colleague why the president was still working. None of the learners volunteered to do so, and it was the teacher who at last, had to give an explanation.

## Teachers' questions to the learners

This section gives a summary of the type of questions that were asked by the teachers during the lessons.

Table 3 summarises how the teachers posed their questions.

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Yes/no        | 3 |
| Facts         | 1 |
| Opinion       | 4 |
| Understanding | 1 |

In all schools, teachers' questions to learners were in the form of opinion and yes/no questions. In some cases factual questions were also asked. This is how the teacher at school A introduced the lesson on earthquakes:

Teacher: Mention three types of tectonic plates  
 Class: African, Euro-Asian and North American plate  
 Teacher: What causes earthquakes?  
 Class: Plates that move apart or collide.

At school B for example, the teacher asked learners to mention products that are produced in the Caprivi region and are exported to other countries (facts). Still at school B, learners were asked to give one problem that a country whose economy depends on imports would experience (understanding).

The teacher at school D used a combination of yes/no questions and questions that required understanding. The following questions were asked:

- Teacher: Can you all see Puller on the map? (yes/no)  
The whole class responds by saying yes.
- Teacher: Is Puller visible from Mashi? (yes/no)  
The whole class - yes.
- Teacher: Give reasons for your answer. (understanding)  
The whole class (quiet). The teacher gives the answer and explains to the class.
- Teacher: What is the difference between an industry and a factory? (opinion)  
The whole class - they are the same. The teacher did not accept or dispute the answer.

In providing answers to these questions, it was observed that learners mostly responded as a group. At two of the schools where this was discouraged, the teacher decided on who should respond. The emphasis in most cases was on giving right answers, rather than on giving reasons for an answer.

### Use of materials

In this section, a summary of the type of teaching and learning materials used during the lessons is presented.

Table 4 summarises the type of materials used.

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Chalkboard         | 3 |
| Textbook           | 4 |
| Overhead projector | 0 |
| Worksheets         | 0 |
| Flipcharts         | 0 |
| Maps               | 1 |



In all four schools, the most frequently used teaching-learning material by both teachers and learners was the textbook. The chalkboard was the second most common material. The teacher at school B only used the chalkboard once when he wrote the topic on it. Throughout the lesson, he and his learners only used the textbook. He did not even summarize the points of the lesson on the chalkboard as others did.

The teacher at school D also used maps as a resource when treating the section on cross-sections. Teachers in all four schools did not make use of any other materials such as worksheets, overhead projectors or flipcharts.

### **Classroom atmosphere**

This section describes the type of classroom atmosphere that prevailed in the four schools at the time of observation.

The classroom atmosphere in all four schools was not challenging. Teachers did very little to motivate their learners to participate in the lessons. Teachers made very little contact with individual learners. Learner to learner interaction was completely absent. Teachers were mainly concerned with the efficient transmission of knowledge. It was only at school D where learners were a little bit active when they looked for answers on topographical maps. The atmosphere in all schools could best be described as dull. Learners sat quietly and were orderly and for most of the period the teacher did the lecturing. This teaching strategy worked well in maintaining authority in the classroom. In all four schools no disciplinary problems were observed and classrooms were well organized.

## Conclusion

In summary, all four teachers had similar ideas of what learner-centred education entails. They all agreed that learners would be actively involved in the lessons and that the role of the teacher becomes that of a facilitator and guide. Teachers also believed that there is a strong link between learner-centred education and resources. In schools where resources are scarce, they felt that the implementation of the new approach will not be realized with ease. On support, the teachers believed that advisory teachers can also assist teachers in the implementation process by providing resources and follow-up support. Teachers believed that through regular visits and workshops, problems that they encounter in the implementation process would be minimized.

When observed in their classrooms, the most common activities centred on lecturing. The role of the teacher was limited to the transmission of knowledge and learners were on the receiving end. Learners did not participate in any form of activities throughout the lessons, they sat quietly and listened to their teachers. Questioning as a technique was not fully utilized by the teachers. In most cases, teachers' questions were directed at the whole class and learners did not even ask questions. Besides the chalkboard, maps and textbook, no other teaching/learning materials were used that would have enhanced learner participation in the lessons.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, the research findings, conclusions and recommendations are discussed. The discussion focuses on three issues:

- teachers' perceptions of learner-centred education
- factors that affect the implementation of learner-centred education in schools
- the impact of INSET on the classroom practice of geography teachers.

#### Teachers' perceptions of learner-centred education

As already mentioned in the chapter on methodology, the four teachers in this study were not trained through the Basic Education Teachers' Diploma (BETD), which advocates the use of learner-centred education in schools. Two had Education Certificate Primary (ECP) certificates that they obtained prior to independence and the other two were graduates from the University of Namibia.

All four teachers interviewed understood learner-centred education as an approach in which learners become active participants in lessons. According to them, although teachers may still play a very significant role in the teaching-learning process, their main task is mainly to facilitate. Learners will do most of the activities and teachers will only check and see if they are doing the right things. This approach also allows learners to ask questions and assist other learners who may have problems. Their understanding of learner-centred education concurs well with the policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture on learner-centred education as outlined in the policy document 'Toward Education For All' which states that:



Our teaching methods used in schools must allow for active involvement and participation of learners in the learning process. Teachers should structure their classes to facilitate this active learner role. Often, that will mean organizing learners in smaller or larger groups, or pairs or working with them individually. It will mean as well using teaching techniques that fit the purpose and content of the lesson and that at the same time encourage active learner participation, for example explaining, demonstrating, posing questions, checking for understanding, helping, providing for active practice, and problem solving (1993a: 60).

The teachers' understanding of learner-centred education also concurs with Brandes and Ginnis (1996:12) who argue that the ownership of learning is with the student. The teacher acts as a facilitator and a resource person. Learning is a human activity that needs least manipulation by others. Most learning is not a result of instruction but rather a result of unhampered participation in a meaningful setting. The teachers also explained they knew learner-centred approach would require of the teacher some qualities and skills that perhaps may differ from those demanded by other didactic methods. A teacher will be able to implement this method if he/she is able to identify and clarify student needs.

Despite the fact that all four teachers had a clear notion of what learner-centred education entails and the advantages it offered, not all were ready to implement the new approach. Three teachers indicated that the change from teacher-centred education to learner-centred education was a move in the right direction. However, one of the teachers stated that there was no need to change from teacher-centred education to learner-centred education because the conditions in schools are not conducive to the implementation of the system. He mentioned among other reasons, overcrowded classrooms as one of the factors that make the implementation difficult. He felt that it would be better if teachers could fall back on their traditional teaching where a teacher conveys all the information. Although this teacher did not mention the advantages of small classes, one can only assume that small classes

facilitate group work activities and may accord the teacher an opportunity to give individual attention to learners.

From what has been said so far, it is clear that the interviewed teachers have a clear understanding of what learner-centred education is and the majority are prepared to implement it. They think the idea of learner-centred education is a good one. However when the same teachers were asked to indicate ways in which they have changed to include learner-centered education in their lessons, all four indicated that they use a combination of both teacher-centred and learner-centred teaching method. One teacher at school A said some topics in geography could best be taught using the teacher-centered method. This is in line with the arguments presented by a panel discussion at the 1998 NIED Educational Conference in Namibia, on how best changes in classroom practice can be improved and supported (Van Graan, 1998). It was argued that the true and effective teaching and learning approach lies somewhere in between the two extremes and it is not an either/or situation but a careful blending of the better of the two methodologies. According to their arguments, the choice of a teaching strategy will be influenced by factors such as the nature of the learning content, the facilities and materials available, the objectives of the lesson and the age and other characteristics of the learners. All methods whether employing group work, individual work by learners or the traditional lecture approach should engage the full active participation of every learner.

What is encouraging is that although the teachers in the four schools have not changed fully, there were some indications that some have started to change and use the new method in schools. As was mentioned in the opening paragraph, these teachers were not graduates of the BETD programme and had only learnt about learner-centred education through in-service training programs. They all agreed that workshops have helped them a lot in the implementation process.

## **Factors that affect implementation**

The teachers in this study mentioned various factors that they believed inhibited the implementation of the learner-centred approach. These include overcrowded classrooms, lack of resources, support and the atmosphere prevailing in schools.

### **Overcrowded classrooms**

The findings indicate that many teachers find it difficult to implement learner-centred education because of overcrowded classrooms. Teachers complained that it is difficult to pay individual attention to everyone in an over-crowded classroom, let alone knowing the learners. Some teachers complained of having classes of up to forty learners. However, when the same teachers were observed in their classrooms, it was interesting to note that none of the classes had learners exceeding thirty. At school A, the grade 10 class had only 19 learners, 26 at school C, 28 at school D and 30 at school B. It was difficult to reconcile what teachers said about large classes in the interviews and what was observed in the real classroom situation because interviews were done first before the observations. Since we were approaching the end of the academic year, it was difficult for me to follow up on the interviews and find out why they complained about large classes while the reality indicated otherwise. The concern about large classes can best be ascribed to the teachers' theoretical knowledge about learner-centered education. At geography workshops, teachers were trained that the new approach is not possible in an environment where classes are overcrowded as this would make group work impossible. It was therefore not surprising that every teacher complained about large classes as one of the impeding factors in the implementation of learner-centred education.

Overcrowding in the classrooms could not be related to the number of learners as most classes in the four schools had learners not exceeding thirty. One can only say



that overcrowding in this sense could refer to the size of classrooms which were small (like at school B) and the type of desks (at school D), which were so long and could not be rearranged into groups hence the straight rows that were observed.

### **Resources**

The issue of the non-availability of resources was mentioned by some teachers as one of the factors that inhibits them in the implementation process. According to information provided during the interviews, teachers believe that learner-centred education can be implemented effectively in schools if resources are supplied. Most of the teachers see a strong link between the new approach and the availability of resources. Textbooks were singled out by all the teachers I interviewed as being one of the most important resources in the implementation of learner-centred education. Although teachers complained about their schools not having enough textbooks, their biggest concern is that even in cases where these books are available, they are outdated and do not have activities that would promote learner-centred education. With old-fashioned textbooks, the onus is upon the teachers to create activities for their learners. This could also pose another problem because most of the schools do not have photocopiers or electricity and the production of worksheets in bulk will be difficult to realize.

### **Support**

During the interviews, the teachers indicated that for them to successfully implement learner-centred education, support has to be forthcoming from principals and advisory teachers. One way in which teachers would wish principals to support them was to offer academic guidance during class visits. To be able to do this, principals would need to attend workshop-training sessions to be conversant with the requirements of learner-centred education. In the implementation process,

principals could also support their teachers by providing the necessary teaching and learning materials and reduce the number of learners to manageable sizes in the classrooms. This will enable teachers to apply aspects of learner-centred education such as group work and pay attention to individual learners. The findings in this study resonate with Fullan (1991:76) who maintains that projects that are actively supported by principals are most likely to succeed. In order for any change to be taken seriously by teachers, principals will have to support them both psychologically and with resources. Fullan argues further that in most cases, principals suffer from the same problems as their teachers in implementing new teaching roles and therefore have to attend workshop-training sessions in order to be acquainted with the demands of the new approach. Davies (1984:119) agrees with Fullan and asserts that the role of the principal in the implementation of change is to create conditions within the school, which will welcome and support change. For teachers to successfully implement learner-centred education in their classrooms, it is suggested that principals of schools should render both psychological and material support to their teachers. My own experiences in the field have shown that teachers in the Caprivi region receive very little support from their principals in the implementation of the new approach. The reason could be that principals have not attended workshops on learner-centred education and therefore find it difficult to assist and guide their teachers.

Respondents in this study also indicated that support needs to come not only from school principals, but from advisory teachers as well. Since learner-centred education is a new approach that most teachers have come to learn about through workshops, the interviewed teachers were of the opinion that training sessions should be held regularly to instil a sense of ownership and confidence in the teachers. Class visits by advisory teachers would help in motivating teachers, as this would give an indication as to how far they are in the implementation process. Problems that teachers face in the implementation process could be identified and

discussed with the teachers. The provision of teaching and learning materials to schools is another way that teachers would wish to see advisory teachers supporting them. However, this task of providing learning and teaching materials is not the responsibility of advisory teachers. Advisory teachers can only assist in recommending the relevant materials to teachers and their principals. This is in line with Fullan (1991:75) who says, teachers can only take change seriously if regional administrators support them through actions. Verbal support without implementation follow-through has very little influence on change. Regional administrators should create necessary conditions for implementation by showing specific forms of support and active knowledge and understanding of attempting to put a change in practice. From the comments made by teachers, the new approach can only be implemented if advisory teachers offer regular support in the form of class visits and conducting regular workshops that would keep teachers informed and make them feel confident in their endeavours to implement learner-centred education in their classrooms.

According to the findings from interviews, the atmosphere prevailing at schools was described by the selected teachers as conducive to the implementation of learner-centred education. The teachers maintained that all teachers at their schools knew about learner-centred education and have started using the approach in different subjects. It is an idea that is supported by all teachers. This conforms to Fullan (1991), that the building of collegiality among all stakeholders in a school, such as teachers, learners, and management, is fundamental to any change. The atmosphere at a school needs to be conducive to a culture of teaching and learning. However, two of the interviewed teachers understood atmosphere to mean the prevailing conditions in their classrooms. Hence their responses concentrated on over crowdedness in the classrooms and the type of benches that make group work impossible in their classrooms.

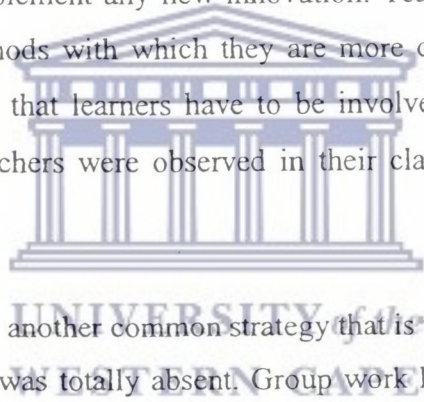


## **The impact of INSET on the classroom practice of geography teachers**

In order to find out whether the four teachers had internalized and were practising the elements of learner-centred education that they clearly articulated during the interviews, I decided to observe them in their classes. Observations were done in the middle of October when teachers were preparing learners for the end of year examinations. Lessons observed were mainly revision lessons. The mere fact that teachers were revising could have a significant effect on the way they taught during the observations. When preparing learners for examinations, teachers may decide to concentrate on those parts of the syllabus that are likely to appear in question papers. In the process, teachers may not find time to divide their learners in groups and invite their contributions, but rather concentrate on drilling them for the examinations. If observed earlier on in the year, teachers might have taught differently.

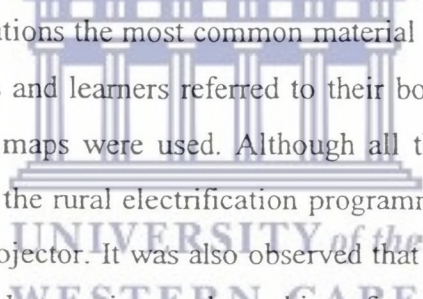
During observations it was evident that all teachers did not use the learner-approach which they could clearly define during the interviews. I did not however, find time to follow up on the interviews when it became evident that teachers were not practising what they claimed to be doing during the interviews. In all four schools, the most common activity was lecturing in which learners sat quietly and listened to the teacher. It was surprising to note that the same teachers who could clearly distinguish the differences between learner-centred education and teacher-centred education during the interviews just did the opposite when they were observed in the classrooms. In all but one school, learners sat in straight rows and all faced the chalkboard. The teachers did all the talking and the learner's role was to listen to the teacher. They were passive and were not engaged in any form of activity either in pairs or in groups. Even at the school where learners sat in groups, it was evident that no activities were given to these learners.

The observations also centered around teachers' and learners' role in the classroom. In all four schools, the teachers' role was concentrated on asking questions and lecturing. Learners sat quietly and listened to the teacher all the time. The only times when the learners were involved was when they responded to the teachers' questions. Teachers did not even allow their learners to answer questions individually but rather answered as a whole group. No attention was given to individual learners as demanded by learner-centred education. Learners did not engage in any other activities and the teachers did not even allow their learners to ask questions if they did not understand anything. This just indicates that teachers will simply not implement any new innovation. Teachers would fall back to their old traditional methods with which they are more comfortable. In the interviews, teachers mentioned that learners have to be involved in classroom decisions, but when the same teachers were observed in their classrooms, the teachers took all decisions.



Group work, being another common strategy that is usually associated with learner-centred education, was totally absent. Group work has an advantage of promoting self-esteem in learners by supporting one another and sharing ideas. It has been proven that sometimes learners best learn when they listen to themselves or learn from their friends than learning from their teachers. Although the teachers could clearly identify the differences between the two strategies (teacher and learner-centred) during the interviews, in the lessons it was mostly the teachers giving information, the teachers getting fully involved and the teacher as the organizer and controller of everything in the classroom. The concept of learner-centred education implies that instead of having teachers perform roles and activities for the learners, the learners should now be responsible for carrying out these activities while the teachers monitor how well the learners are performing those activities.

On the teachers' questioning technique it was observed that this was not properly utilized as required by the learner-centred approach. Most of them used a combination of both opinion and yes or no questions. Mostly questions were asked during the introduction of the lessons and in the presentations. If properly done, questions could have helped teachers know the learners' interests or values and determine their attitudes towards their fellow learners and teachers. In the process of asking and answering questions, the learners become actively involved and the teacher can facilitate the active involvement of individual learners. When learners give answers, the teacher gets a better understanding of the learner in terms of his/her subject knowledge and this may give the teacher a starting point for working with the particular learner.



During the observations the most common material used during the lessons was the textbook. Teachers and learners referred to their books all the time. It was only at one school where maps were used. Although all the four schools have access to electricity through the rural electrification programme, none of these schools had a single overhead projector. It was also observed that three of the schools used in the study do not have photocopiers so the making of worksheets is a big problem for the teachers. In cases where teaching-learning materials are not available, teachers can improvise and make their own with the assistance of their learners. In all four schools, this was not done.

From the observations of the four teachers, it became evident that the implementation of learner-centred education as a result of INSET has not been realized. None of the teachers used any of the characteristics of learner-centred education in the classrooms. INSET workshops have only succeeded in informing the teachers about what should be done in a learner-centred approach. The changes from teacher-centred education to learner-centred education did not manifest in the



classrooms. Teachers still used the traditional 'lecture' method. Therefore INSET had little impact on the classroom practice of the geography teachers observed.

In many of the schools in the region where this study was done, it is the teacher who decides on the syllabus, chooses the methods, selects the resources, creates the tasks and exercises and decides when, where and how things are to be done in his classroom. In a teacher-centred approach, the teacher's authority is seen as consisting of these aspects and if taken away, the teacher would lose his/her status and credibility. In most Namibian traditional schools similar to the ones in which this study was conducted, any attempts to transfer ownership from teachers to learners will always be met with resistance because it will be seen as a threat to the whole profession. Most teachers in the region are still operating in this stage and although they know what is to be done in a learner-centred approach, they would be more comfortable with the old system. All the other characteristics of learner-centred education were virtually absent during the observations. Although teachers understand the demands of learner-centred education theoretically, when it comes to the actual teaching, they simply fall back on to the old traditional system. These teachers were mostly trained and taught using the old system and one would be inclined to employ the same style in the field. There are many roles for a teacher in the learner-centred approach, but teachers in this study seemed to concentrate their teaching in ways that they were taught.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

The sample of four teachers used in this study was very small. It is suggested that further research could be conducted in the same area that could include principals, learners and teachers from other subject areas. Nevertheless, I would like to draw from the findings of the study to make a few general recommendations regarding in-service education and learner-centred teaching in Namibian schools.

Teachers in Namibia face a big challenge of moving from a teacher-directed approach that dominated their education to teach in a new learner-centred approach which is completely new to them. The four teachers in this study have shown a willingness to follow a learner-centred approach but seem to lack the skills and techniques to apply it in a classroom situation. The fact that teachers are reluctant to implement in the classroom what they have learnt in the workshops could stem from a number of reasons. Teachers may understand all the changes that are associated with learner-centred education but fail to implement them because they do not see anything wrong with their present practice. Learner-centred education, for example, demands that teachers should try out new teaching behaviours and use new instructional materials and testing procedures in response to problems that teachers may not see as existing. Many teachers are happy with their present classroom practice for as long as their students learn and progress to the next grade. It sometimes happens that teachers resist the implementation of an innovation because it increases the complexity of their work life. One other reason that may lead to resistance in the implementation of learner-centred education in Namibian schools is that it may be contrary to the teachers' beliefs about what makes effective teaching. The learner-centred approach advocates participation and active involvement of learners in the learning process through group discussions, which may be viewed by some teachers as a threat to their authority in the classrooms. With all these factors, it is possible to find teachers who understand the demands of the new practice (like the four in this study), but fail to implement them (Chapman, 1997:84-86).

The other reason that may lead to teachers failing to implement learner-centred education in their schools is that not enough is being done to model the key elements of the approach during workshops. Despite the fact that teachers sit in groups of four or five during workshops, in most cases they are not exposed to problem solving activities. The presenters would always demonstrate to the teachers about what is to be done in a learner-centred classroom but teachers are not given

time to present some of the activities during workshops and receive feedback. The same could be said about questioning and teaching aids. During workshops, teachers do not receive enough input on the type of questions that can be used in classrooms and the importance of learner-initiated questions. Teachers are also provided with copies of teaching aids such as worksheets, and transparencies that have been made at national workshops and are not given a chance to design and make them during workshops.

Workshops can only be effective if they are followed up with intensive training and follow-up support from the providers of INSET once teachers are back in their schools. Training should also be designed in such a way that it reduces the complexity of the teachers' work life by making it easier for them to understand what they are supposed to do differently in the new approach. To ensure that teachers apply the learner-centred strategies in their classrooms, principals need to visit them in their classrooms and support them with materials such as textbooks. They also need to motivate them about the advantages that the new approach offers. Through regular visits, teachers will feel motivated and realize that they are not alone in the implementation process. If these teachers are not motivated in any way, they may not see the need to try out this new approach as most of them were trained and taught using the old system. It is only through regular in-service training workshops and support both at school, regional and national level that teachers will begin to realize the need for a change from teacher-centred education to learner-centred education.

One can only suggest that in order for teachers to implement learner-centred education with ease, enough textbooks should be supplied to schools. The books supplied to schools should have some activities that will make it possible for learners to be engaged in lessons. This will mean most textbooks need to be revised and new books to be supplied to schools. There are a lot of financial implications



that will be involved and with the Ministry's scarce resources, this may be very difficult to accomplish. The assumption that learner-centred education depends on the use of resources would imply that the situation of scarce resources in Namibia makes learner-centred teaching impossible. If the revision and reprinting of textbooks becomes financially impossible, teachers need to be equipped with the necessary skills that will enable them to be creative and make worksheets that they could use in their schools. Building spacious classrooms that could accommodate the required number of learners can solve the issue of overcrowded classrooms or alternatively the number of learners in classrooms could be reduced to fit in the smaller rooms.

The implementation of change from teacher-centred to learner-centred education in Namibia can succeed if teachers see a need for change and become involved in the planning of the desired change. Most workshops that are organized for Namibian teachers are planned at national level without the active participation of teachers, which according to Chapman (1997) is likely going to lead to disappointing results in the implementation process. The involvement of teachers in the planning of change is vital because they have first-hand knowledge of classroom realities. In designing reform activities, the teachers' beliefs about the nature and severity of the problem that the innovation is trying to address must be taken into account. In so doing, it is more likely that teachers will be motivated to implement the reforms as this will give them a sense of ownership and will not regard the innovation as having being imposed upon them.

In my discussions and observations with the teachers, I discovered that the rural-urban variable did not have any influence on the implementation of learner-centred education, as I could not establish the differences between rural and urban schools. One can conclusively say that the teachers who participated in this study have not yet internalized learner-centred education and much more still needs to be done. The fact that teachers feel they have less responsibility in a learner-centred system

proves that teachers who were not trained through the BETD programme may require more intensive training on learner-centred education than the mere training that they receive in workshops run by advisory teachers.



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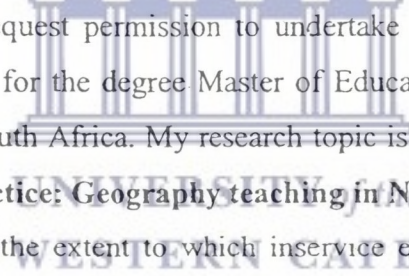
**APPENDIX A****COVER LETTER**

30/09/1999

The Principal  

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Dear Sir

RE: Permission to undertake research at your school

I hereby wish to request permission to undertake research at your school. I am presently registered for the degree Master of Education with the University of the Western Cape in South Africa. My research topic is entitled “ **Inservice education and classroom practice: Geography teaching in Namibia**”. This research study is aimed at exploring the extent to which inservice education provided by advisory teachers impacts on the practice of geography teachers in Namibia. It also aims at identifying factors that may enhance or inhibit the successful implementation of INSET in classrooms and may provide valuable information for the improvement and designing of in-service training workshops.

The study will be done through interviews (geography teachers) and classroom observations (grades 9 and 10). Interviews will preferably be conducted in the afternoons so as not to disrupt the normal teaching activities. Your school has been randomly selected and participating teachers will be given an opportunity to remain anonymous. The investigation will be carried out entirely in connection with a degree course and should in no way be viewed as a formal ministry evaluation.

This exercise of data collection will be done during the first two weeks in October'99 i.e. from 04/10/99 to 15/10/99.

Thanking you in advance for your co-operation

Yours sincerely

R. S. Mutwa



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**APPENDIX B****THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

1. In your opinion, what is the difference between teacher-centred and learner-centred education?
2. Do you really see the need to change from teacher-centred teaching to learner-centred teaching and learning? If yes, why?
3. In what ways, if any, have you changed to incorporate learner-centred teaching and learning in your lessons?
4. In which geography topics, if any, do you mostly apply learner-centred teaching and learning?
5. To what extent is your learner-centred teaching a direct result of in-service education?
6. What support do teachers need in the implementation of learner-centred education?
  - a. From principals?
  - b. From educational authorities/ advisory teachers?
7. How does the availability of resources in your school affect the implementation of learner-centred teaching methods?



8. Is the atmosphere prevailing at your school conducive to the implementation of learner-centred methods? If yes, how?
9. Do you feel free to adopt new classroom practices and materials in your school?
10. What motivates you to incorporate the learner-centred approach in your geography lessons?
11. Any other comments on learner-centred education.



## APPENDIX C

## CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FORM

SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHING QUALIFICATION \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHING EXPERIENCE \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE \_\_\_\_\_ CLASS \_\_\_\_\_

SUBJECT \_\_\_\_\_

TOPIC \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF LEARNERS \_\_\_\_\_

**Item one:** Activities observed in the classroom

- (a) Groupwork
- (b) Lecturing
- (c) Individual work
- (d) Class discussions

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**Item two:** Teacher's role in the classroom

- (a) Lecturing
- (b) Asking questions
- (c) Supporting
- (d) Motivating



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**Item three:** Learner's role in the classroom

- (a) Doing activities
  - (b) Responding to teacher's questions
  - (c) Asking questions
  - (d) Other role
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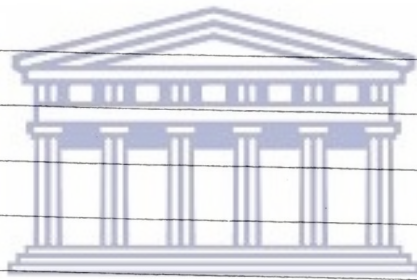
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**Item four:** Teacher's questions to the learners

- (a) Factual questions
- (b) Yes or no
- (c) Opinion questions
- (d) Understanding



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**Item five:** Use of materials

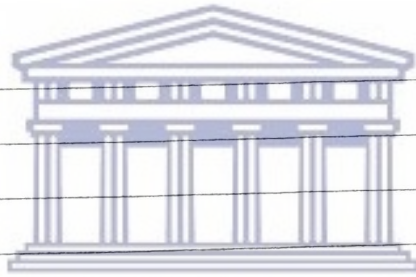
- (a) Chalkboard
  - (b) Textbook
  - (c) Overhead projector
  - (d) Worksheets
  - (e) Flipcharts
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**Item six:** Classroom atmosphere

- (a) Warm
- (b) Lively
- (c) Active
- (d) Dull
- (e) Disciplined



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**APPENDIX D**

**FORM OF CONSENT**

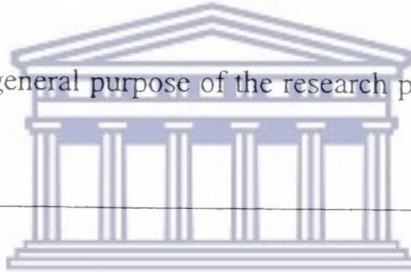
**CONSENT TO SERVE AS A SUBJECT OF RESEARCH**

I consent to serve as a subject in the research investigation entitled

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The nature and general purpose of the research procedure has been explained to me by:



The investigator is authorized to proceed on the understanding that I may terminate my service as a subject in this research at any time I so desire.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

To be kept by the researcher.